

Are Men Born Sinners? The Myth of Original Sin

Alfred T. Overstreet

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[INTRODUCTION](#)

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Introduction

IGNORANCE PROTECTS AND PERPETUATES THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

Most Christians who profess to believe in the doctrine of original sin are ignorant of exactly what its teachings really are. They are ignorant of the fact that the doctrine has not always existed. They are ignorant of the fact that it evolved, that it had its roots in a heathen philosophy, and that it was made a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church in the 5th century A.D. They are ignorant of the fact that it is only a theory, and that there is really not one but several differing theories that have evolved and come down to us in the church. They are also ignorant of the fact that the Bible passages used as proof-texts for this doctrine have been taken out of context and tortured into teaching a doctrine that is completely foreign to the Bible. Finally, they are ignorant of the fact that the doctrine of original sin is an evil doctrine that corrupts Christian practice, blackens the character of God, excuses sin in the sinner, contradicts the Bible, makes Jesus a sinner, harms the cause of Christ, and stumbles professing Christians into hell. And it is this ignorance of Christians concerning these facts that helps to protect and perpetuate the doctrine of original sin.

I must confess that at one time I also preached that men are born sinners. At that time I had only been saved a short while and had little knowledge of the Word of God. I testified and preached at street meetings, in jail services, and in missions and taught that men are sinners and lost because they were "conceived and born in sin." Why? Because that is what I had heard other preachers preach. I was ignorant at that time concerning the very doctrine I was preaching. But at the time I was preaching this I felt a check in my spirit. I did not feel right about telling sinners that they were sinners and on their way to hell because they were born sinners. My God-given convictions of justice told me that a sinner could not be to blame for and could not sincerely repent for the nature he was born with. It was later, in my studies of theology at Bethany Bible College, that I came across a copy of Charles G. Finney's

Lectures on Systematic Theology and, through it, came to realize that the doctrine of original sin was a false and unbiblical doctrine.

The doctrine of original sin is not only false and unbiblical, it is also gross superstition. At one time men thought that the earth was flat and that sailors were in danger of sailing off the edge of the world. Now, regrettably, there is superstition in the church concerning the most fundamental doctrine of the Bible the doctrine of sin for the church teaches that sin can be propagated and that men are born sinners.

Are men born sinners? Our answer to this question will affect our attitude toward sin and will ultimately affect our conduct as well. The Christian's views on sin cannot help but affect his conduct. If the Christian believes he is born with a sinful nature and sins unavoidably because of that nature, he is not likely to view his sins as the serious crimes they really are. If he believes he has a nature that makes holiness impossible, he is not likely to be concerned about sinning against God. If he believes that God is his Creator and that he has been created with a sinful nature, this must affect his attitude toward God and the justice of God's dealings with man.

Are men born sinners? Our answer to this question is of supreme importance. For how we answer it will have a direct bearing on our attitude toward sin, toward God, and toward holy Christian living.

Chapter 1

ARE MEN BORN SINNERS?

My friend and I stood looking down at his tiny newborn baby, lying contentedly in his crib.

"Of course," said my friend, "our little Tommy is a sinner."

These words were a continuation of the doctrine my friend had taught earlier in his Sunday school class: a doctrine that is accepted as orthodoxy almost universally in our churches, the doctrine that all of humanity sinned in Adam when he ate the forbidden fruit, that Adam's sin, its guilt, and its curse were imputed to all his descendants, and that all of his descendants are now born with an Adamic sin nature which makes sin unavoidable and makes us "by nature the children of wrath."

What makes this incredible doctrine believable is the fact that there are verses in the Bible which seem to teach it. Psalm 51:5 comes immediately to the mind of the Christian who has been taught to believe in the doctrine of original sin: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." This settles it for the Christian. If the Bible says we were "shapen in iniquity" and "conceived in sin," then it has to be so.

And the above text would teach that men are born sinners if it were meant to be taken literally. But the language of this text is not literal, it is figurative. Both context and reality demand a figurative interpretation of this text.

For example, let's compare Psalm 51:5 with Job 1:21, which says: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." If Psalm 51:5 can be interpreted literally to teach the doctrine that David and all other men are born sinners, then Job 1:21 can be interpreted literally to teach the doctrine that Job and all other men will some day go back into their mother's womb.

Neither Psalm 51:5 nor Job 1:21 is to be understood literally. They are both figurative expressions. Both context and our knowledge of reality

demand a figurative interpretation of these two texts.

David uses figurative language throughout his Psalms. In fact, in the 51st Psalm, verses five, seven, and eight are all figurative expressions. So if verse five can be made to teach that men are born sinners, then verse seven can be made to teach that hyssop cleanses us from sin when it says, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean." Also, verse eight can be made to teach the doctrine that God breaks the Christian's bones when he sins, and that his broken bones rejoice when he is forgiven "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." Another of David's Psalms, Psalm 58:3, can be made to teach the astonishing doctrine that babies speak from the very moment they are born: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."

But who would seriously teach from this last text that babies actually do speak as soon as they are born? None of these passages is meant to be understood in a literal sense. They are all figurative expressions. If they were understood literally, they would all teach what we know to be contrary to reality; for reality teaches us that bones don't rejoice, hyssop doesn't purge sin, babies don't speak as soon as they leave the womb, and an unborn child is not morally depraved.

The same rules of interpretation that would permit Psalm 51:5 to teach that babies are born sinners, would, if applied to these passages (or if applied to many other passages in the Bible), allow for every kind of perversion and wild interpretation of God's Word. Look again at the words of Job 1:21: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." Did Job, by these words, mean to teach that he and all other men would some day go back into their mother's womb? We know that such a meaning is absurd. But it is just as reasonable to give to Job 1:21 the nonsensical meaning that Job and all other men will some day go back into their mother's womb, as it is to give to Psalm 51:5 the nonsensical meaning that David and all other men are born sinners. David was not teaching in this passage that he was born a sinner. He instead was confessing to God the awful guilt and sinfulness of his heart, and he cried out to God in strong language the language of figure and symbol to express that awful guilt and sinfulness.

But if David intended to affirm that he was literally "shapen in iniquity and

conceived in sin," then he affirmed absolute nonsense, and he charged his Creator with making him a sinner; for David knew that God was his Maker:

Thy hands have made me and fashioned me. Psalm 119:73

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body, and knit them together in my mother's womb. Psalm 139:13 (Living Bible)

Know ye that the Lord he is God: It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. Psalm 100:3

Are we to understand from these passages that God fashions men into sinners in their mother's womb? No, we know that God does not create sinners. Yet, upon the supposition that Psalm 51:5 teaches that men are born sinners, these texts could teach nothing else. Who cannot see that the doctrine that men are born sinners charges God with creating sinners? It represents man as being formed a sinner in his mother's womb, when the Bible clearly teaches that God forms man in his mother's womb. It represents man as coming into this world a sinner, when the Bible clearly teaches that God creates all men. It may be objected that God created only Adam and Eve, and that the rest of mankind descended from them by natural generation. But this objection does not relieve the doctrine of an inherited sin nature of its slander and libel of the character of God. For if man has a sinful nature at birth, who is it who established the laws of procreation under which he would be born with that nature? God, of course. There is no escaping the logical inference that is implicit in the doctrine of an inherited sin nature. It is a blasphemous and slanderous libel on the character of God.

But one might as well reject the Bible out of hand, if he does not want to recognize that God is the Creator of all men. For the fact that God is the Creator of all men is one of the clearest truths taught in the Bible.

Thy hands have made me and fashioned me. Psalm 119:73

Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee: for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Psalm 139:13, 14

Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb? Job 31:15

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee. Jer. 1:5

Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Mal. 2:10

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Eccl. 12:1

Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us and not we ourselves. Psalm 100:3

I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth...for it repenteth me that I have made them. Gen. 6:7

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. Gen. 1:26,27

Ye are gods; and all of you are the children of the most High. Psalm 82:6

For in the image of God made he man. Gen. 9:6

Man is the image and glory of God. I Cor. 11:7

Men are made after the similitude of God. James 3:9

The Lord formeth the spirit of man within him. Zech. 12:1

The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. Job 33:4

He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. Acts 17:25

We are the offspring of God. Acts 17:29

I am the root and the offspring of David. Rev. 22:16

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions. Eccl. 7:29

This last text not only declares that God has created man, but it also affirms that God created man upright. If man is created upright, he cannot be born a sinner; and if he is born a sinner, he cannot be created upright. Either one or the other may be true, but they cannot both be true for the two are contradictories.

But when God says he "created us in his image, and gave us life and breath and all things," are we to understand that he created us as

sinners? When he says, "We are his offspring," are we to understand that his offspring are born sinners? When Jesus said, "I am the root and the offspring of David," are we to understand that David sprang forth from the root Christ Jesus with a sinful nature? Or, are we to understand that Jesus, as the offspring of David, was born with a sinful nature? The very fact that Jesus was a man, descended from Adam, and born with a human nature as we are, shows that men are not born with a sinful nature. I John 4:3, II John 7, Heb. 2:14, Heb. 2:16-18, Heb. 4:15, Rom. 1:3, Matt. 1:1, Luke 3:38.

The doctrine of original sin is false: it slanders and libels the character of God, it shocks man's god-given consciousness of justice, and it flies in the face of the plainest teachings of God's holy Word. The doctrine of original sin is not a Bible doctrine. It is a grotesque myth that contradicts the Bible on almost every page. But because good Christians can quote texts from the Bible to "prove" the doctrine of original sin, they are convinced it is true. But good Christians have rejected truth and clung to error in the name of the Bible before.

For instance, Galileo and Copernicus brought to the church the truth that the earth was not the center of the universe, that the sun did not go around the earth but that the earth went around the sun and that the earth rotated on its axis, giving the illusion that the sun was going around the earth.

We all know this to be true now, but did all good Christians believe it then? No, both John Calvin and Martin Luther clung, along with the church, to the error that the earth was the center of the universe, that the sun went around the earth and that the earth stood still.

"Martin Luther called Copernicus 'an upstart astrologer' and a 'fool who wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy.' Calvin thundered: 'Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit? Do not the Scriptures say that Joshua commanded the sun and not the earth to stand still? That the sun runs from one end of the heavens to the other?'"

Both Calvin and Luther were good, well-meaning men, but they still clung to their false views because they could quote Scripture texts to support them. Likewise, there are good, well-meaning Christians today who also erroneously cling to the doctrine of original sin because they can quote

texts from the Bible to "prove" it.

It is these texts, that have been taken out of context and misinterpreted to support this false doctrine, that we will examine in the next chapter.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.
Psalm 51:5

The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Psalm 58:3

And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. Eph. 2:3

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Job 14:4

What is man that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Job 15:14

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Rom. 5:12, 18, 19

Chapter 2

PROOF-TEXTS USED TO SUPPORT THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

Many Christians mistakenly believe that the doctrine of original sin has always existed. It has not always existed. The doctrine did not exist, even in its elementary stages, until about the third century A.D. And it did not become a generally accepted doctrine until the fifth century A.D., after it was made a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, through the influence of Augustine. Charles G. Finney makes the following comment upon the origin of this doctrine:

It is a relic of heathen philosophy, and was foisted in among the doctrines of Christianity by Augustine, as every one may know who will take the trouble to examine for himself.

This doctrine, that was "foisted in among the doctrines of Christianity by Augustine," now boldly parades about, wearing a mask of decency and respectability, fashioned of Biblical proof-texts. It is these proof-texts, which have served to mask the falseness of this doctrine, that we will now examine:

I. "Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

We have already examined this text in chapter one and have seen that it is a figurative expression and does not teach that men are born sinners. The very idea that men can be born sinners is absurd. It is both a physical and a moral impossibility to be born a sinner. It is a moral impossibility because men cannot justly be sinners by birth. That men can be sinners and guilty and condemned at birth is morally unthinkable.

It is a physical impossibility to be born a sinner because of the nature of sin. Sin is not a substance. It has no physical properties and cannot possibly be passed on physically from one person to another. What is sin? The Bible says, "Sin is the transgression of the law." I John 3:4. So, according to the Bible, sin is an act or a choice that transgresses the law of God. It cannot, therefore, be a substance because choice and substance are contradictories. Is a wicked act a substance? Is

disobedience, transgressions, lawbreaking, or unrighteousness a substance? Is guilt a substance? No, they are all moral concepts or moral qualities. And it is impossible for them to be transmitted physically. When we speak of sin, we are describing the character of an act. The word sin describes the character of an act as being wicked or wrong.

Sin is no more a substance than friendliness, goodness, or virtue are substances. If sin is a substance that can be transmitted physically, then virtue also must be a substance that can be transmitted physically. And what would be the result if all this were true? Why, sinners would beget sinners, and saints, of course, would beget saints!

Sin is not a substance, and we all know that sin is not a substance. Yet learned theologians still maintain the impossible dogma that sin, like some malignant disease, has been passed on physically from Adam to all his descendants. How ridiculous it is to make sin a physical virus, instead of a voluntary and responsible choice. How foolish to speak of men being born sinners! Only in some fantastic science fiction novel might moral character be spoken of as being passed on physically in the bloodstream of man. Moral character, whether holiness or sinfulness, cannot be passed on physically. It is gross superstition to believe that it can be.

Then what did David mean by the expression, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me"? I answer, he used this figure of himself conceived and formed in his mother's womb as the embodiment of iniquity and sin to express, in strong symbolic language, his present sinful and guilty condition before God.

This is David's penitential Psalm. He is deeply humbled and repentant for the sins he has committed, and he uses this strong language to confess his wickedness and guilt. But if David wanted God to understand his language to mean that he was a sinner by birth, the whole spirit of the Psalm is contradicted and changed. It is no longer a Psalm of penitence for sin, but it is turned into a Psalm of excuse for sin. For what better excuse could David make for his sins than the excuse that he was born a sinner? But these are not the words of a man making excuses for his sins; these are the words of a man humbled and deeply repentant for having sinned against God.

To interpret this text literally violates two fundamental rules of sound Biblical interpretation. The first one is the rule that a text must not be

interpreted in such a way as to contradict the clear teachings of the Bible in other parts. The Bible is the word of God. It is without error or contradiction, and so it is only reasonable that each part should maintain a unity, harmony, and agreement with every other part. God is not the God of confusion and contradiction. There is unity and agreement throughout his Word.

But we have already pointed out that a literal interpretation of Psalm 51:5 is completely inconsistent with its context, because it amounts to David making an excuse for his sins in a Psalm which is manifestly a confession of guilt for his sins. The whole character and spirit of the Psalm is contradicted and changed by giving verse five a literal meaning.

A literal interpretation is also inconsistent with the figurative and symbolic language used throughout this Psalm. To arbitrarily give a literal meaning to this one verse, without giving a literal meaning to the other symbolic expressions in this Psalm shows an inconsistency in interpretation that can only be explained by a prepossessed belief in the doctrine of original sin.

A literal interpretation of Psalm 51:5 is also inconsistent with numerous passages and teachings throughout the Bible. It makes God the Creator of sinners. For the Bible clearly teaches that God is our Creator, that he forms us in our mother's womb, and that he gives us life, breath, and all things. It directly contradicts the Scriptures that teach that God has created us upright and in his own image. And it makes Jesus a sinner, for the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus took upon himself human nature and became a man. Heb. 2:11, 14, 16-18; Heb. 4:15.

The second rule that it breaks is the rule that a text must not be interpreted in such a way as to contradict reality. We should forever remember that the Bible does not teach nonsense. It does not teach that God breaks our bones when we sin (Psalm 51:8). It does not teach that broken bones rejoice (Psalm 51:8). It does not teach that our sins are purged with hyssop (Psalm 51:7). It does not teach that babies speak and tell lies as soon as they are born (Psalm 58:3). It does not teach that men go back into their mother's womb (Job 1:21). And it does not teach that the substance of unborn babies is sinful (Psalm 51:5). These are all figurative expressions, and to interpret them in their literal sense is to teach nonsense and what every man knows to be impossible and

contrary to reality.

The nature of sin, the nature of justice, and the nature of God are such that it is impossible for men to be born sinners. First, sin is voluntary. Is it a sin to be born with blue eyes, black hair, a small nose, or large ears? Is it a sin to be born short or tall? Is it a sin to be born at all? No, because we have no choice in the matter of our birth. Our birth, and everything we are and have at birth, is ours completely involuntarily. Second, sin is not a substance. It has absolutely no material or physical properties. Sin is an act, and so it is impossible for it to be passed on physically. Third, sin is a responsible choice. Newborn babies are not responsible. They do not know the difference between right and wrong, and so cannot be responsible. A child has no moral character at birth. Moral character can only belong to a child when he has come to know the difference between right and wrong. A child must first reach the "age of accountability" before he can sin. Isaiah 7:16, Deut. 1:39. Fourth, sin is personal and non-transferable. No man can sin for, or be made guilty for, the sin of another man. Moral character, guilt, and accountability are non-transferable. Ez. 18:20, Deut. 24:16.

God's justice makes it morally impossible for men to be born sinners. Is it possible that the infinitely just God could cause men to be born sinners and condemn them to hell for the sin of Adam? Can the perfect justice of God permit him to impute guilt to the innocent or punish the innocent for the guilt of another? Is it really possible that innocent little babies open their eyes in this world under the wrath of God and that they are condemned to the torments of hell for the sin of Adam? Our whole reason revolts at such an idea. Yet this is the incredible dogma that is taught as orthodoxy in Christian churches today!

This doctrine represents God as the most cruel and unreasonable being in the universe. It represents him as condemning and sending men to hell for a nature which they received without their knowledge or consent, and with which he created them. According to this doctrine, millions of heathen have been born into this world with a sinful nature and have lived without ever hearing the Gospel; they have sinned necessarily because of the nature with which they were born, and then they have died and gone down into hell without a chance to be saved. What a blasphemous slander this doctrine is upon the character and justice of God!

II. Psalm 58:3 "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

This text is also supposed to teach that men are born sinners. But like the last text, it is not literal but figurative. If it were literal, it would teach that babies speak and tell lies as soon as they are born, and that they alienate themselves from God, and go astray from him immediately upon coming out of the womb.

But all of this is clearly contrary to reality. We know that babies do not do any of these things at birth. Therefore it is clear that this language is not to be understood literally. If this verse taught that babies literally come forth from their mother's womb "estranged from God," it would contradict other passages of the Bible which teach that babies are not "estranged from God" at their birth. John the Baptist was not "estranged from God from his mother's womb." On the contrary, the angel who announced his birth said, "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." Luke 1:15. Also, while still in the womb he literally leaped for joy when Mary, the mother of our Lord, greeted Elizabeth. These facts are hard to reconcile with a literal interpretation of Psalm 51:5 and 58:3.

Job also testified that he had been a guide to the widow "from his mother's womb." Job 31:18. Job obviously did not mean that from the time he was a helpless little newborn infant that he had been ministering to the needs of the widow. Also, the Psalmist David testified that God had been his help "from the womb." Psalm 71:6. It is easy to see that the phrase "from the womb" is often used in a figurative sense and should not always be understood in its literal sense. The following passages illustrate how the phrases "from the womb" and "from my mother's womb" are used in the Bible: Isaiah 44:24; Isaiah 46:3; Isaiah 48:8; Isaiah 49:1, 5; Gal. 1:15; Psalm 71:5, 6; Job 31:18; Psalm 58:3.

If this text, or any other text from the Bible, teaches that babies are sinners by birth, then it teaches that all newborn babies are children of the devil. For the Bible teaches that all sinners are children of the devil. John 8:44, I John 3:8, 10. I have already referred to the remark of a friend of mine a strong advocate of the doctrine of original sin who, as we stood looking down at his little newborn baby, said, "Of course our little Tommy is a sinner." I said nothing at the time, but I have since wondered what would have been his reaction, if I had responded, "Then you believe that

God has given you a child of the devil." Now, we know that little babies are not children of the devil. They are children of God. Jesus said of them: "Of such is the kingdom of God." Luke 18:16. God's Word testifies that "children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Psalm 127:3. Jesus would not have said, "Of such is the kingdom of God," if children were literally "estranged from God from their mother's womb."

III. Eph. 2:3 "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

This text is supposed to teach that babies are born with a sinful nature and that they are under the wrath of God because of that nature. But isn't it a monstrous and a blasphemous dogma to say that God is angry with any of his creatures for possessing the nature with which he created them? What? Can God be angry with his creatures for possessing the nature that he himself has given them? Never! God is not angry with men for possessing the nature he has given them, but only for the perversion of that nature. The Bible represents God as angry with men for their wicked deeds, and not for the nature with which they are born.

The word nature in this text has nothing at all to do with what man is by birth. The word nature here refers to the character of contemporary sinners before they were converted. The word nature can be used in two distinct senses. It may refer to what man is involuntarily because of his birth, or it may refer to what man is voluntarily, by choice and apart from birth. The Apostle Paul uses it in the latter sense in the text under consideration. They were not children of wrath by birth. They were children of wrath because of voluntary wickedness. This is evident from the context of Eph. 2:3. The context shows that Paul did not have his eye on their birth at all when he used the word nature. On the contrary, he had his eye wholly on the conduct of contemporary sinners before they were converted to Christianity. He calls attention in verses one and two to the fact that, before their conversion, they had "walked according to the course of this world," in "trespasses and sins." In verse three, he calls attention to their former fellowship with other sinners in fulfilling the "lusts of the flesh" and "the desires of the flesh and of the mind." And then, summing up the wickedness, the guilt, and the ill-desert of their former life, he says "and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

But to teach from this text that babies are born with a sinful nature, and

that they come into this world under the awful wrath of God because of that nature is a shocking doctrine. What? Is God really ready to let loose the terrors of his anger and the consuming fires of his wrath upon innocent little babies for the nature with which they are born? Shame on the church for teaching such an abominable, God-dishonoring doctrine!

Adam and Eve had two natures; yet we know that they were not created with two natures. They had the nature they were created with, which was good and upright, and they also had a sinful nature after they had sinned. It was this last nature, a voluntary nature, which made them "By nature the children of wrath." Men may have a nature in three distinct ways:

1. By birth. This is the good and upright nature with which we are all created.
2. By having sinned and come short of the glory of God. This is a voluntary nature. It is the nature that makes us enemies of God, children of the devil, and "by nature the children of wrath."
3. By being born again. John 3:3. This is also a voluntary nature in which we, by faith, become "partakers of the divine nature." II Peter 1:4

The word nature in the Bible, when it refers to our birth, never refers to a sinful nature. This is shown in Rom. 2:14, which says: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law..." Now the word nature in this text does refer to the nature we receive at birth. But it is evident that the word nature used here is not a sinful nature. For how would a sinful nature ever cause us to "do by nature the things contained in the law"? A sinful nature would not cause us to do the things contained in the law a sinful nature would only cause us to commit sin! (See Rom. 1:26, 27; I Cor. 11:14; and Rom. 2:14, 15, which show that our nature teaches us the differences between right and wrong, but never causes us to do the wrong.)

To maintain that we are born with a sinful nature is to charge God, the Author of our nature, with creating sinners. Men are not "born short of the glory of God." They "sin and come short of the glory of God." Our Lord took on human nature. We know therefore that human nature is not sinful in itself. Finally, that babies are not born with a sinful nature and are not "children of wrath" by birth is evident from what Jesus said of them: "For of such is the kingdom of God." Luke 18:16.

IV. Job 14:4 "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."

This text is supposed to teach that sinful parents will bear sinful children. But this is to completely ignore its context, which shows that Job had his eye wholly on the frail and dying state of man, and not at all upon his moral state. Job 14:1-6. The whole sense of what Job was saying was that no one can bring other than frail and dying offspring from frail and dying parents. To arbitrarily force this text to teach something that is completely foreign to its context can only be another example of an interpretation dictated by a prepossessed belief in the doctrine of original sin.

If this text teaches that a sinner invariably produces another sinner, it teaches blasphemy. For if the doctrine of original sin is true, then Mary, the mother of our Lord, was born a sinner. So if Job 14:4 really does teach that a sinner must produce another sinner, there could be no way of escaping the blasphemous conclusion that our Lord also was born a sinner.

V. Job 15:14 "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?"

It should first be said that these are the words of Eliphaz and so cannot be quoted as inspired truth. God himself testified that Job's comforters did not hold the truth. Job 42:7. But suppose we did accept this verse as inspired truth, what does it teach? It certainly teaches nothing about a morally depraved physical constitution. It merely implies the sinful condition of all mankind, without saying anything about how men got that way.

But again, this text, like the last, if used to teach the constitutional sinfulness of men, would teach the blasphemy that our Lord Jesus was born a sinner; because he was a man and was born of a woman.

VI. Rom. 5:12, 18, 19 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

This passage is interpreted by those who believe in the doctrine of original sin to mean that because Adam sinned, men are now born sinners that is, they become sinners involuntarily and necessarily by inheriting a sinful nature from Adam. But this passage does not teach the doctrine of original sin. It does not teach that men are born sinners. It does not teach that sin is transmitted physically or any other way from Adam to his descendants. It does not teach that the sin of Adam was imputed to his descendants. It does not teach that men have sinned "in Adam." On the contrary, Romans 5:14 teaches that Adam's sin was not the sin of his descendants: "Them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." (Those that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression were certainly sinners. But their sin was different from the sin of Adam. They had sinned before Moses gave the law, and had only sinned against the law of their conscience, and not against a positive precept, as had Adam. Rom. 5:13-14. And the fact that Paul says they "had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" shows that Paul did not consider the sin of Adam to be their sin.)

Rom. 5:12-19 does not in any way teach the doctrine of original sin. Sheldon tells us what it does teach:

The Apostle here draws a comparison between the evil potency in the sinning Adam and the beneficent or saving potency in the righteous Christ...Both are pictured rather according to their tendency than according to literal fact. Surely the potency of grace in Christ does not actually come upon all men unto justification of life, but it tends to that end, and hence is so described. In like manner the evil potency in the sinning Adam is characterized according to its tendency.

To interpret the phrase "made sinners" to mean that men are born sinners and become sinners involuntarily and necessarily by receiving a sinful nature from Adam, is a forced and inconsistent interpretation of this passage; for this passage not only says that all men are "made sinners" because of Adam's transgression, it also says that all men are "made righteous" by the obedience of Christ, and that the free gift of life "came upon all men" by Christ Jesus. So, for the advocates of the doctrine of original sin to arbitrarily give to the phrases "made sinners" and "came upon all men" the meaning of physical force and physical necessity when these phrases refer to Adam's sin, without giving the same meaning to them when they refer to Christ's righteousness, is once again an example

of a forced and inconsistent interpretation dictated by a prepossessed belief in the doctrine of original sin.

Paul does not affirm an involuntary, necessary, or irresistible connection between either the sin of Adam and mankind, or the righteousness of Christ and mankind. Otherwise, verse 18 would teach the universal salvation of mankind: "The free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." We know that universal salvation is not taught in the Bible. Men are not saved involuntarily, automatically, and necessarily because of the obedience of Christ. Nor are they "made sinners" involuntarily, automatically, and necessarily because of the transgression of Adam. But the context shows that men are "made sinners" in the same way that they are "made righteous," that is, voluntarily or willingly. Rom. 5:18, 19, 21. In verse 18, Paul compares the judgment that came upon all men because of Adam with the free gift of life that came upon all men because of Christ, and says "as" the one, "even so" the other. In verse 19, he compares the way the many were "made sinners" with the way the many were "made righteous," and says "as" the one, "so" the other. And in verse 21, he compares the reign of sin through Adam's transgression with the reign of grace through Christ's righteousness, and says "as" the one, "even so" the other. The context and language of this passage require that we understand the connection between Adam's sin and the sins of the rest of mankind to be moral and voluntary instead of physical and involuntary.

Paul did not teach that men are "made righteous" involuntarily through Christ, nor did he teach that men are "made sinners" involuntarily through Adam. He did not teach that sin is a substance that dwells in the flesh. He did not teach that sin is inherited from Adam through "natural generation." He did not teach that we receive a sinful nature from Adam that is the "fountain and cause" of all our "actual" sins. He did not teach that men are born sinners or that sin is transmitted physically from Adam to his descendants. All of this has been the fabrication of man's imagination. Paul's whole message, and only message, in this passage is the message that the power of Adam's transgression to bring sin, death, and condemnation upon all men has been transcended by a much greater power the glorious, liberating power of God's grace in Christ Jesus, which breaks the power of sin and brings justification, righteousness, and life upon all men. Rom. 5:15-21.

Chapter 3

THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

Many Christians who profess to believe in the doctrine of original sin do not know what it teaches. Even more Christians are ignorant of its history and origin: that it had its roots in a heathen philosophy, that it has evolved, and that it was made a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church in the fifth century A.D., primarily by the influence of Augustine.

Finally, most Christians do not know the fact that the doctrine of original sin is really a theory. In fact, there are more than three differing theories of original sin. The admission of A. H. Strong as to the unsatisfactory nature of even the best of these theories is very interesting:

We must grant that no one, even of these latter theories, is wholly satisfactory. We hope, however, to show that the last of them the Augustinian theory, the theory of Adam's natural headship, the theory that Adam and his descendants are naturally and organically one explains the largest number of facts, is least open to objections, and is most accordant with Scriptures.

Now let us see what the advocates of the doctrine (theory) of original sin teach:

1. The whole human race sinned in Adam when he sinned. Adam's will was the will of the race, so that all men sinned in Adam and rebelled with him when he sinned.
2. When Adam sinned, human nature was corrupted, so that now all men are born with a sinful nature.
3. This sinful nature is the fountain and direct cause of all of man's sins. Man sins by nature and cannot help but sin.
4. Because of Adam's transgression, all men are guilty, under the just "wrath and curse of God," and are liable to the "pains of hell forever."
5. Even newborn babies open their eyes in this world under the "wrath

and curse" of God. They are guilty and condemned from the moment of their birth.

This is the incredible dogma that is unblushingly taught by those who hold to the doctrine of original sin. (Note: see the end of this chapter for direct quotes from advocates of original sin.)

Up to this point we have spoken of the theory of original sin without distinguishing between the differing theories. But now, let us look at the historical origin of each of the three main theories, along with their distinctive features, as outlined below:

1. The Augustinian Theory. This is also called the Theory of Adam's Natural Headship and the Realistic Theory. This theory was formulated by Augustine in the fifth century A.D. The Augustinian Theory affirms that, by virtue of organic unity, the whole human race existed in Adam at the time of his transgression. It says that Adam's will was the will of the species, so that in Adam's free act, the will of the race revolted against God, and the nature of the race corrupted itself. All men existed as one moral person in Adam, so that in Adam's sin we sinned, we corrupted ourselves, and we brought guilt and merited condemnation upon ourselves.
2. The Federal Theory. This theory is also called the Theory of Condemnation by Covenant and the Immediate Imputation Theory. It had its origin with Cocceius in the 17th century A.D. According to this theory, God made a covenant with Adam, agreeing to bestow upon all his descendants eternal life for his obedience, but making the penalty for his disobedience to be the condemnation of all his descendants. Since our legal representative or federal head did sin, God imputes his sin, guilt, and condemnation to all his descendants. It was thought that this theory was necessary because of the problem in the Augustinian Theory of accounting for the non-imputation of the subsequent sins of Adam and less remote ancestors for if real existence in Adam explained our responsibility for his first sin, why should not real existence in Adam and in subsequent ancestors make us guilty for those sins, too?
3. The Theory of Mediate Imputation. This theory is also called the Theory of Condemnation for Depravity. This is the theory formulated by Placeus in the 17th century A.D. Placeus originally denied that Adam's sin was in any way imputed to his posterity. But when his first view was

condemned by the Synod of the French Reformed Church in 1644, he published this later view. According to this view, all men are born with a depraved nature and are guilty and condemnable for that nature. They are not viewed as being guilty because of the sin of Adam, as in the Federal Theory. Instead it is the corrupted nature which they inherit from Adam that is sufficient cause and legal ground for God to condemn them.

It is probably shocking for the Christian who has been taught these theories as Bible truths to be told that not one word of any of them can be found in the Bible. Christians believe these theories to be Bible doctrines because theologians, preachers, and Sunday school teachers teach them as if they were Bible doctrines quoted directly from the Bible, and give them a semblance of credence with Bible texts quoted out of context. However, these theories are not Bible doctrines. Where can you find written in the Bible that "The whole human race existed in Adam at the time of his transgression"? Or that "Adam's will was the will of the species"? Or that "In Adam's free act the will of the race revolted against God and the nature of the race corrupted itself"? Or that "All men existed as one moral person in Adam, so that in Adam's sin we sinned, we corrupted ourselves, and brought guilt and merited condemnation upon ourselves"? Or where can it be found written in the Bible that "Adam was the federal head and moral representative of the race, and God made a covenant with Adam, agreeing to bestow upon all his descendants eternal life for his obedience and making the penalty for his disobedience to be the condemnation of all his descendants"? Or where in the Bible can it be found written that "All men are guilty and condemnable for the depraved nature with which they are born"? Nowhere! These theories are not in the Bible. You can search the Bible through from cover to cover and you will never find a word of these theories on its pages. The fact that mere men have had the boldness to teach these theories as Bible truths is a serious and sobering fact. God has twice warned men not to tamper with his Holy Word, neither adding to it nor taking from it. Deut. 4:2, Rev. 22:18, 19.

There is another sobering fact that should be of interest to every Christian who has ever been an adherent of the doctrine of original sin. The theologians themselves, who advocate the doctrine of original sin, prove conclusively that it is false. For instance, those theologians who advocate the Realistic Theory (the Augustinian Theory) prove

conclusively that the Federal and Mediate Imputation Theories are unscriptural and false. On the other hand, those theologians who advocate the Federal Theory prove just as conclusively that the Realistic and Mediate Imputation Theories are unscriptural and false. Each theologian, in his turn, proves all the other theories to be false.

Hodge is an advocate of the Federal theory of original sin. His arguments show conclusively that the Realistic Theory is false:

The realistic theory cannot be admitted. The assumption that we acted thousands of years before we were born, so as to be personally responsible for such act, is a monstrous assumption. It is, as Baur says, an unthinkable proposition; that is, one to which no intelligible meaning can be attached...We did not then exist. We had no being before our existence in this world; and that we should have acted before we existed is an absolute impossibility...The doctrine, therefore, which supposes that we are personally guilty of the sin of Adam on the ground that we were the agents of that act, that our will and reason were so exercised in that action as to make us personally responsible for it and for its consequences, is absolutely inconceivable.

Berkhof is also an advocate of the Federal Theory. These are some of his arguments against the Realistic Theory:

...(3) It does not explain why Adam's descendants are held responsible for his first sin only, and not for his later sins, nor for the sins of all the generations of forefathers that followed Adam. (4) Neither does it give an answer to the important question, why Christ was not held responsible for the actual commission of sin in Adam, for he certainly shared the same human nature, the nature that actually sinned in Adam.

And,

If in Adam human nature as a whole sinned, and that sin was therefore the actual sin of every part of that human nature, then the conclusion cannot be escaped that the human nature of Christ was also sinful and guilty because it had actually sinned in Adam.

Now A. H. Strong, who advocates the theory which the above theologians have rejected, in his turn, rejects the Federal Theory which they advocate:

...It impugns the justice of God by implying: (a) that God holds men responsible for the violation of a covenant which they had no part in establishing...We not only never authorized Adam to make such a covenant, but there is no evidence that he ever made one at all. It is not even certain that Adam knew he should have posterity... (b) that upon the basis of this covenant God accounts men as sinners who are not sinners... (c) That, after accounting men to be sinners who are not sinners, God makes them sinners by immediately creating each human soul with a corrupt nature such as will correspond to his decree. This is not only to assume a false view of the origin of the soul, but also to make God directly the author of sin...

Hodge himself, although he is an advocate of the Federal Theory of original sin, still admits that it is somewhat difficult to reconcile his view with the justice and goodness of God:

It may be difficult to reconcile the doctrine of innate evil dispositions with the justice and goodness of God, but that is a difficulty which does not pertain to this subject. A malignant being is an evil being, if endowed with reason, whether he was so made or so born. And a benevolent rational being is good in the universal judgment of men, whether he was created or so born. We admit that it is repugnant to our moral judgments that God should create an evil being; or that any being should be born in a state of sin, unless his being so born is the consequence of a just judgment.

All the above theologians reject the Mediate Imputation Theory. Strong says:

Since the origination of this corrupt nature cannot be charged to the account of man, man's inheritance of it must be regarded in the light of an arbitrary divine infliction a conclusion which reflects upon the justice of God. Man is not only condemned for a sinfulness of which God is the author, but is condemned without any real probation...

Sheldon, who rejects all three of these theories makes this comment on the Mediate Imputation Theory:

An evil which is matter of pure inheritance cannot rationally be made the ground of the moral reprobation of the person inheriting. To him it is calamity, and more properly calls for compassion than for condemnation...If it is irrational cruelty to blame one for a bodily deficit

which was thus given, rather than acquired by personal misconduct, it is, in like manner, gross injustice to blame one for a spiritual deficit which was imposed outright and in no part was acquired.

From this, we see that the dogma of original sin is proven false by its very advocates. If, then, it is false, where did it come from and how did it come to be received as a Christian doctrine? I quote again from Finney:

It is a relic of heathen philosophy, and was foisted in among the doctrines of Christianity by Augustine, as everyone may know who will take the trouble to examine for himself.

The above statement by Finney can be confirmed by a simple reading of church history. Church history records that from the second and third centuries A.D. on, both the practices and doctrines of Christianity were corrupted in an ever-increasing way by heathen philosophies with their attendant pagan superstitions and morality. This influence was profound. There was gross licentiousness on the one hand and extreme asceticism on the other; veneration and worship of saints, relics, images, and pictures; the development of a priesthood with priestly rituals and ceremonies; magical and spiritual powers ascribed to water, sacred words, and signs; water baptism for the remission of sins; and the baptism of infants. Heathen mythology was introduced and given a Christian form. The heathen concept of a purgatory was accepted with its doctrine of the purging of sins in the after life, and the saying of masses and prayers for the dead.

Many of the theologians during these first centuries were converts from heathenism, who wedded their pagan philosophical concepts to Christianity. These were literary men, educated in the philosophies, who gave the concepts of their heathen beliefs to Christianity, thereby corrupting its purity. To read the theological writings of some of these early "church fathers" is like reading a fantastic story! And it was these early church fathers, from the second and third centuries on, who made the first allusions to a doctrine of original sin.

Tertullian was one of the first church fathers to allude to a doctrine of original sin. His views on sin harmonize with his stoic philosophy. He believed that the soul was physical and that it was propagated by the parents in procreation. He gives an account of a Montanist prophetess, who professed to have seen a soul and attempted to describe its outward

appearance. Because of his materialistic concept (the stoical idea of the essential unity of matter and spirit, i.e., materialistic monism), he could not allow that God himself was immaterial. He taught that sin is a physical taint that is propagated from the parent to the child through procreation.

Origen was another of the church fathers who taught a doctrine of original sin. He was a student of all the current philosophies and far outstripped Tertullian in wild philosophical speculation. His theology bears the unmistakable marks of both Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism. He taught the preexistence of souls and that all men sinned and fell in a former existence. His belief was that men, before their existence in this world, were spirits without bodies, and that the material world was created by God for the disciplining and purifying of these fallen spirits. Fallen man had been banished into material bodies to be disciplined and purified. He taught that this estrangement of fallen spirits would some day come to an end, and all men would be saved. Even the devil and demons would someday be restored to God. Origen believed in a purgatorial fire where souls would be punished and prepared for the presence of God. In the end, all spirits in heaven and in earth including the demons, would be brought back to God, after having ascended from stage to stage through seven heavens. Origen believed that sin is rooted in the human nature of man. He believed that sin is a necessary consequence of man's material nature. Origen later assumed the existence of a sort of hereditary sin originating with Adam and added this idea to his belief in a preexisting fall. And he, like Augustine after him, supposed that there was an inherent pollution and sinfulness in sexual union.

Augustine himself was deeply imbued with the heathen philosophies of his day. He first became a disciple of the Manichaeans. The Manichaeans were a Gnostic-Christians sect, with the Christian elements reduced to a minimum. They taught, among other things, that all matter is inherently evil. Because of this view, they also taught that Christ's bodily manifestations were only apparent, and that he did not actually come in the flesh. They denied the real incarnation of Christ, as well as his bodily resurrection, because of their view of the essentially evil nature of all matter. Augustine's nine years with them accustomed him to regard human nature as essentially evil and human freedom as a delusion.

Augustine next fell under the influence of Neo-Platonism, and his

theological views were strongly influenced by this philosophy as well. However, his doctrine of sin shows the obvious influence of the Gnostic teachings of Manichaeism, in which he assumes the most ridiculous teaching of all the heathen philosophies the teaching that matter can be sinful. And this is the source of his doctrine that sin can be passed on physically from one person to another. Harnack says:

We have, finally, in Augustine's doctrine of sin a strong Manichaean and Gnostic element; for Augustine never wholly surmounted Manichaeism.

Albert Henry Newman also remarks:

Augustine, the greatest of the Latin Fathers, was for many years connected with the Manichaeans and his modes of thought were greatly affected by this experience.

Augustine's doctrine of sin, with his belief in the inherent sinfulness of the physical constitution, is wholly Manichaean. His idea that sin is propagated through the marriage union, that sexual desire is sin and that sexual lust in procreation transmits sin is also Manichaean. Augustine built his doctrine of original sin upon this premise that sexual lust in procreation transmits sin. Harnack says:

The most remarkable feature in the sexual sphere was, in his view, the involuntariness of the impulse. But instead of inferring that it could not therefore be sinful and this should have been the inference in keeping with the principle "omne peccatum ex voluntate" he rather concludes that there is a sin which belongs to nature, namely, to *natura vitiata*, and not to the sphere of the will. He accordingly perceives a sin rooted in *natura*, of course in the form which it has assumed, a sin that propagates itself with our nature. It would be easy now to prove that in thinking of inherited sin, he always has chiefly in view this very sin, the lust of procreation; but it is impracticable to quote his material here.

And again:

...and Augustine imagined paradisaical marriages in which children were begotten without lust, or, as Julian says jestingly, were to be shaken from trees. All that he here maintains had been long ago held by Marcion and the Gnostics. One would have, in fact, to be a very rough being not to be able, and that without Manichaeism, to sympathize with his feeling. But to yield to it so far as Augustine did, without rejecting marriage in

consequence, could only happen at a time when doctrines were as confused as in the fifth century.

Augustine went so far as to say that, although matrimonial intercourse was permitted by the Apostle Paul, it was nevertheless still sinful.

Augustine taught that God makes us sinners and decrees our sinfulness. God punishes sin with sin. He punishes us for sin with original sin. The sin which mankind inherits is both sin and sin's punishment. This has been ordained by God. It is the penalty of sin that we do the evil we would not.

He believed in absolute and unconditional predestination and election, irresistible grace, complete bondage of the will (a necessitated will man is free only to do evil), and natural inability to obey God. He taught that all mankind sinned in Adam when he sinned and is condemned with him. Men are born sinners now and are completely unable to obey God or do anything good.

He taught that those who are elect and saved are to make up for the fallen angels, so that the number of angels will be complete again. The death of Christ was a payment of what was rightly owed to the devil for our redemption. He believed in a purgatory, masses, alms, and prayers for the dead. He believed that all are polluted by original sin except for Mary. Unbaptized infants are damned because of inherited sin and guilt. He believed in the intercession of saints and martyrs in our favor, and the whole superstitious baggage of the Roman Catholic Church. In short, he was subject to all the prejudices and superstitions of his day in forming his religious views. Harnack says:

So also he was implicated in all the prejudices of contemporary exegesis. It is to be added, finally, that, although less credulous than his contemporaries, he was, like Origen, involved in the prejudices, in the mania for miracles, and the superstition of the age...A slave learns to read in answer to prayer, in three days, and without human help; and we have divine judgments, miracle-working relics, etc.

Again:

Even the most cultured Fathers from the fifth century ceased to be capable of distinguishing between the real and the unreal; they were defenseless against the most absurd tales of the miraculous, and lived in

a world of magic and enchantment...Two clerics of North Africa were suspected of a scandalous act; both denied the charge; one must have been guilty; Augustine sent them over sea to the grave of Saint Felix of Nola. There they were to repeat their assertions; Augustine expected that the Saint would at once punish the liar.

And again:

At the sixth Council a Monothelite offered to prove the truth of his confession by writing it and placing it on the breast of a dead man, when the dead would rise up. The fathers of the Council accepted the test.

It was from this soil the soil of religious ignorance and superstition, and from the soil of heathen philosophical speculation that the Augustinian doctrine of original sin sprang up.

The following is a compilation of direct quotes from advocates of the doctrine of original sin, beginning with direct quotes from Augustine:

Our nature sinned in Adam. Augustine R. Seeburg, History of Doctrine, Vol. I, p. 338.

It was just, that after our nature had sinned...we should be born animal and carnal. Augustine R. Seeburg, History of Doctrine, Vol. I, p. 338.

Our nature, there transformed for the worse, not only became a sinner, but also begets sinners. Augustine R. Seeburg, History of Doctrine, Vol. I, p. 342.

From this condemnation no one is exempt, not even new-born children. Augustine R. Seeburg, History of Doctrine, Vol. I, p. 343.

Unconscious infants dying without baptism are damned by virtue of their inherited guilt. Augustine Albert Henry Newman, Manual of Church History, Vol. I, p. 366.

Children are infected by parents' sins as well as Adam's and the "actual" sins of the parents impose guilt upon the children. Augustine Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol. V, p. 227.

There is in us a "necessity of sinning." Augustine R. Seeburg, History of Doctrine, Vol. I, p. 343.

Whatever offspring is born is...bound to sin. Augustine R. Seeburg,

History of Doctrine, Vol. I, p. 344.

The "nature and essence" of man is, from his birth, an evil tree and a child of wrath. Martin Luther R. Seeburg, History of Doctrine, Vol. II, p.229.

Even children dying unbaptized are lost. Martin Luther R. Seeburg, History of Doctrine, Vol. II, p.245.

Original sin is the hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature...which first makes us subject to the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which the Scriptures call works of the flesh. Calvin R. Seeburg, History of Doctrine, Vol. II, p. 399.

This does not excuse man, for he himself has brought on this condition by the part he had in the sin of Adam. Henry C. Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, p. 230.

The sin of Adam is the immediate cause and ground of inborn depravity, guilt and condemnation to the whole human race. A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology, p. 625.

This evil tendency or inborn determination to evil, since it is the real cause of actual sins, must itself be sin, and as such must be guilty and condemnable. A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology, p. 611.

It may be difficult to reconcile the doctrine of innate evil dispositions with the justice and goodness of God, but that is a difficulty which does not pertain to this subject. A malignant being is an evil being, if endowed with reason, whether he was so made or so born, and a benevolent rational being is good in the universal judgment of men, whether he was so created or so born...We admit that it is repugnant to our moral judgments that God should create an evil being; or that any being should be born in a state of sin, unless this being so born is the consequence of a just judgment. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 308.

In the sight of God his sin was the sin of all his descendants, so that they are born as sinners...Every man is guilty in Adam, and is consequently born with a depraved and corrupt nature. And this inner corruption is the unholy fountain of all actual sins. L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 251.

Q. 16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression. Shorter Catechism.

Q. 19. What is the misery of that estate whereinto men fell?

A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever. Shorter Catechism.

By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. Westminster Confession.

They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation. Westminster Confession.

Original sin is the corruption of man's nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to evil, and that continually. Larger Catechism.

From this original corruption whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions. Westminster Confession.

This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated: and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin. Westminster Confession.

No man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed. Larger Catechism.

They deplore their inability to love their Redeemer, to keep themselves from sin, to live a holy life in any degree adequate to their own convictions of their obligations. Under this inability they humble themselves. They never plead it as an excuse or palliation; they recognize it as the fruit and evidence of the corruption of their nature

derived as a sad inheritance from their first parents. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 273.

They have corrupted themselves. Deut. 32:5 All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. Gen. 6:12

They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good...They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Psalm 14:1, 3

The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. Gen. 8:21

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Rom. 3:23

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions. Eccl. 7:29

Chapter 4

THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF SIN

The Bible teaches that all men originate their own moral depravity. Gen. 6:12, Gen. 8:21, Deut. 32:5, Psalm 14:1-3, Rom. 3:23, Eccl. 7:29. The Bible teaches that men sin and corrupt themselves. In fact, early in mankind's history upon the earth men had become so corrupt that God sent a flood to destroy them.

I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth. Gen. 6:7.

Observe that God was angry with "man whom I have created." Certainly he was not angry with them because of the nature with which he had created them. No, it was because they had corrupted themselves that God was angry with them.

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. Gen. 6:11, 12.

To corrupt means to make morally depraved. It means to pervert what is good and upright. It means to make unclean what was once clean. It means to spoil what was once good and unspoiled. The word corrupt always implies a former state that was unspoiled, clean, good, or upright. It is never used to speak of the original created nature of man. It speaks of what man has become because of spoiling or perverting the nature with which he was created.

Moral beings have never needed a sinful nature to make them sin. The first sin ever committed was committed by the devil. He did not have a sinful nature to make him sin. Then, a third of the angels fell. They did not have a sinful nature to make them sin. Then both Adam and Eve sinned. They did not have a sinful nature to make them sin. Then, why should it be thought necessary for men to be born with a sinful nature to account for their sins? The Bible does not teach that men must have a sinful nature in order to sin; it teaches that men sin in spite of a good nature:

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they

have sought out many inventions. Eccl. 7:29

The above Scripture is very clear. God has created men upright, but they have sinned in spite of an upright nature. This truth is taught directly, and by implication, throughout the whole Bible.

Acts 17:29 says, "We are the offspring of God." When the Apostle Paul made this statement, he was addressing heathen sinners. We know, therefore, that this verse applies to all mankind, and not just to those who are Christian believers. What, then, does this verse mean?

1. It means that we are all children of God by creation.
2. It means that, since we are the offspring of God, we are created in his image and likeness. (Advocates of the doctrine of original sin teach that men are no longer created in God's image since Adam sinned. This teaching directly contradicts both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. See Gen. 9:6, I Cor. 11:7, James 3:9.)
3. It means that everything we are and have at birth comes to us from God.
4. It means that, since God is the Creator, the Father, and the Author of all that we are and have at birth, we cannot be born sinners. God has created us, and he does not create sinners. He created us in his image and likeness, which is not sinful. We are his offspring, and his offspring do not come into this world as sinners.
5. It also implies and means that every sinner is the author of his own moral depravity. He becomes a sinner after he reaches the "age of accountability," i.e., after he knows right from wrong and after he "knows to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Isaiah 7:16, Deut. 1:39, Rom. 2:15, Rom. 5:14, Rom. 9:11.

The following texts also show that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore with a good and upright nature:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. Gen. 1:26, 27

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. Gen. 9:6

Man is the image and glory of God. I Cor. 11:7

Therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. James 3:9

The statements in the last three texts were made after the death of Adam, so they refute the teaching that men after Adam are not created in the image of God. If we believe that these texts teach that God has created us in his image and if we believe that it is impossible for God to create men with sinful natures, then we must believe that these texts are teaching that God has created man upright and that man has sinned in spite of an upright nature, as it declares in Eccl. 7:29.

Rev. 22:16 says, "I am the root and the offspring of David." In this verse Jesus is speaking and says that he is both the Creator and the offspring of David. How foolish it is, then, to maintain that man is born with a sinful nature, for Jesus both created human nature and also partook of human nature when he became a man.

God has created man upright and without sin. He has created man in his own image and likeness with sensibility, intellect, reason, conscience, and free will. Man has all the faculties and powers of moral agency. He knows right from wrong. The law of God is written in his heart. He is free and knows himself to be free and able to obey the law of God. His conscience approves his right conduct and condemns his wrong conduct.

All men, everywhere, have these same moral faculties and powers. A heathen man may be ignorant and primitive, but the law of God is written in his heart. His conscience approves his right conduct and condemns his wrong conduct. He has the same moral consciousness of a standard of right and wrong as any man who knows the Bible:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another. Rom. 2: 14,15.

All men, everywhere, know themselves to be free and responsible moral agents. They know they are accountable for their deeds. They know this because the moral nature with which God has created them testifies to them of these truths. Some men deny this and claim that man's

conscience, his knowledge of right and wrong, and his ideas of responsibility and accountability are not really innate revelations of his nature, but are merely learned and changeable convictions, acquired through reading the Bible, through religious instruction, or through the influence of society and environment.

But in spite of what some men say, the fact remains that all men know intuitively that they are responsible and accountable for their actions. An absolute standard of right and wrong is revealed and apparent to all men. Man's moral agency and his responsibility and accountability are so apparent that he cannot rationally deny them. He can no more deny them than he can deny his existence. This can be shown from the following:

1. Let someone come up to you, and without any provocation, hit you in the face. Would you need to be acquainted with the Bible, or would you need to know that society frowned on such conduct to know that you had been wronged? What man ever needed the Bible or religious instruction to know that it is wrong for someone to forcefully take what is his? Do you need the Bible to know that it is wrong for a person to insult you, lie about you, or abuse you in some way? Could any society convince itself through education that it is really right to hate, lie, steal, and murder or that it is wrong to love and do good to its neighbor? To maintain that hatred, murder, lying, stealing, and every other kind of meanness and injustice are wrong only in the eyes of those who have been taught to frown upon them is sublimely ridiculous.
2. This is because right and wrong are first truths of reason self-evident truths derived or given to us from our nature and relations as moral beings, and not from the philosophy, teaching, or arbitrary will of society. Right and wrong do not even derive from the arbitrary will of God. For if the arbitrary will of God made law right, then God could command any law to be right. He could command: "Thou shalt hate, thou shalt lie, thou shalt steal, thou shalt covet thy neighbor's wife, thou shalt be selfish, and thou shalt seek the misery and unhappiness of thy neighbor." And upon the supposition that God's arbitrary will made law right, it would be right to lie, steal, hate, and do everything possible to make mankind miserable and unhappy. But God's law is declaratory. He has declared to us the law of our nature. He has declared to us the same law of right and wrong that is founded in and revealed to us by our nature, necessities, and relations as moral beings.

3. Jesus recognized that there is a common standard of right and wrong revealed to all men when he gave the Golden Rule: "And whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Matt. 7:12 If men did not have a common knowledge of right and wrong revealed to them in and by their nature, they could not obey the Golden Rule because obedience to the Golden Rule depends upon a subjective knowledge, common to all men, of right conduct toward others.

4. The claim that morality is only a changing thing, which is established in each time context by the society in existence, has missed the point. For although it is true that different societies accept or permit things that other societies do not permit, still, man's innate convictions of right and wrong remain the same. What a man or a society will permit and the convictions of conscience are two different things. For instance, a man may himself be a thief and a liar. But does that mean that he has no convictions against stealing or lying? If someone steals from him, will he claim that there is nothing wrong with stealing? What liar ever said, "I see nothing wrong with lying. I love and admire liars. In fact, I just love it when people lie to me." Or what murderer would ever say, "I see nothing wrong with murder; in fact if someone attempted to murder me, I would put up no resistance at all."

5. If there were no common standard of right and wrong revealed to man by his nature, we could have no human government. In fact, human government would be a mere imposition were it not for man's moral nature and would be ridiculous, as ridiculous as a moral government over animals. The very fact that men do have human government shows that men know themselves to be responsible moral agents. It shows that they have innate convictions of right and wrong, and that they have a conscious knowledge of responsibility and accountability.

6. But the fact that human government is judged to be unjust, if it makes arbitrary law or imposes unjust penalty, shows that there is an ultimate standard of right and wrong a law revealed in our nature which all men know and appeal to. For instance, let a judge decide that he wants to sentence a convicted murderer to only one day in jail, and see if society does not rise up as one man to denounce the injustice of the sentence! But what does society appeal to in pronouncing the sentence unjust? Of course, it appeals to that self-evident standard of right and wrong which

is revealed to all men in their moral nature. Or let us imagine that all the laws of our land are repealed overnight, and new laws are imposed such as the following: "It is a felony, punishable by life imprisonment to do anything good for your neighbor. All citizens are required by law to seek the misery and hurt of their neighbor. Therefore, all citizens are required to lie, steal, kill, and in other ways abuse their neighbors and seek to deprive them of their rights. In keeping with this new law (which cannot violate any absolute standard of righteousness and justice, since there is no natural law of justice, but all of man's convictions of right and wrong are merely the result of education and environment, and so can be changed at will without infringing upon anyone's rights) all men who have been imprisoned for past crimes will now be set free. (For there is no such thing as a self-evident standard of criminal action, because our convictions of wrong-doing are wholly dependent upon environment and education, and so can be changed at will.) Therefore, any citizen who does right and who does not do wrong will be sentenced to life imprisonment, and those citizens who will devote their lives to being selfish and seeking the misery of others will have the favor of this government."

Now, this supposition is ludicrous. But it would not seem ludicrous at all were it not for the innate knowledge of right and wrong in all men which makes them see it as ludicrous. The very fact that it is so obviously ludicrous to everyone shows that everyone has the same innate knowledge of right and wrong.

7. Language shows that all men have the same innate ideas of justice, right and wrong, and accountability. Words such as sin, wickedness, justice, injustice, right, wrong, good, evil, obligation, accountability, innocence, and guilt are just a few of the words which men use to express innate moral concepts that all men have. Man's language is a mirror of his rational moral nature.

8. Novelists know that all men have the same standard of right and wrong revealed to them in their nature. They do not write different novels for the wicked than they do for the righteous. The reason is that both wicked men and good men have the same standard of right and wrong revealed to them in their nature. It is not necessary for a novelist to write two versions of his novel, one for good men and another for bad men. For to write a novel in which the hero is evil and unjust would offend the

conscience of both wicked and good men. The hero of the novel is never described as a bad man. He is always described as a good man, a just man, and a courageous man. And when the reader (even the reader who is wicked and unjust) sees that he is just and fights against evil, he will identify with him and experience satisfaction when he finally triumphs. Wicked men do not identify with the villain because of their irresistible convictions of justice, which by a law of necessity cause them to take sides with righteousness, justice, and goodness. The truth is that all men, whatever their character, have a common awareness of right and wrong. God has written his law in the hearts of all men!

9. All men, without exception, know that doing good to others rather than evil is their obligation. They know that kindness ought to be repaid by gratitude and not by hatred. If a man were to repay a kind deed with a hateful deed, his act would be considered wrong by all men. All men, without exception, know that they are under an obligation to govern their own conduct by the same rules as they think binding upon other men. There is only one adequate explanation of all this: man is a rational moral being created in the image of God, with the law of God written in his heart, and he cannot escape the testimony of that law!

10. The fact that men will deny the wrong they have done shows that they recognize an absolute standard of right and wrong. For instance, a man is accused of lying, cheating, or stealing. If the accusation is true, why does he deny it? It can only be that he recognizes that what he has done is wrong, for he would have no reason to hide or deny what he has done if he did not recognize it to be wrong.

11. The fact that men blame other men for wrongdoing shows that all men have the law of God written in their hearts. For instance, if someone's car is stolen, he would never say, "Oh, I don't blame whoever stole my car. After all, there is nothing wrong with stealing. People just think it's wrong to steal because society has educated them that way." The employee who is cheated out of his wages by his employer doesn't say, "Oh, he hasn't done anything wrong. He just learned a different set of ethics than most of us." All men resent unjust treatment when they are treated unjustly. If anyone abuses them with degrading or filthy language, they will be offended and blame the one who has abused them. And if anyone were to attempt to explain to them that they have not really been wronged and that they just think they have been wronged because of

their religious education or environment, they will judge that person a fit candidate for the crazy house. The truth is that all men blame other men for wrongdoing, and this is true even if they know that they themselves are guilty of the same things. A man may be a liar, a thief, and a cheat himself, but he still judges those attributes as wrong in others. Whoever heard of a liar who was happy to be deceived by another liar? What liar would ever say, "I just love and admire liars; they are so noble"?

12. There is no escaping the fact that men have a common awareness of right and wrong and that they have this awareness without ever having read the Bible, and without the shaping or teaching influence of society. Man's knowledge of right and wrong is not the product of society. On the contrary, it is because of man's innate knowledge of right and wrong that an ordered society can and does exist with some degree of cohesion and decency. In fact, it is only man's common awareness of right and wrong, given him in his nature, that keeps society half-way on the track of decency and order. I say "half-way" because, although our moral nature forces irresistible convictions of right and wrong upon us, it cannot force us to do the right. We, as free moral agents, are able to obey or disobey the law of our nature.

13. Man's whole system of human government with its law and its penalty for the broken law is founded and built upon his common awareness of responsibility and accountability. Without this awareness, human government would not and could not exist. Therefore, human government with its laws, penalties, police forces, courts, judges, etc., gives mute testimony to the fact that all men know themselves to be moral agents and fully responsible and accountable for their deeds. Otherwise, moral government would be an imposition and senseless, as senseless as a moral government over the beasts of the field.

Man is created as more than one of the dumb beasts of the field. Man is an intelligent rational spirit. He is created in the image and likeness of God. He is able to know God, commune with him and have fellowship with him. How noble is the nature that God has given man! How glorious are his powers and faculties as a moral being, created in the image and likeness of God! How holy his possibilities and how lofty his position by creation, but how criminally low he has fallen! He has fallen from the glorious position of a child of God to the perverted position of a devil. Man is a child of God by creation, but a child of the devil by choice! "We

are his offspring." Acts 17:29. "Ye are gods; and all of you are the children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." Psalm 82:6, 7. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John 8:44. "He that committeth sin is of the devil." I John 3:8.

The Bible represents man to be just exactly what he knows himself to be and that is why men cannot escape the conviction that the Bible is the Word of God it represents him as being a responsible, rational moral being, with moral faculties and powers which enable him to know and do right, but who has sinned against the light of his nature. It represents him as having resisted his God-given reason, trampled on conscience, and abused free moral agency. In short, it represents man as being under God's just wrath, not for being born with a sinful nature, but for resisting, abusing, and perverting the faculties and powers with which God created him. It should be forever remembered that obedience to God's law is in accord with the moral nature that God has given us, but that disobedience to God's law resists and abuses the moral nature that God has given us.

The Bible doctrine of sin is this: men have been created upright, in the image and likeness of God, with the law of God written in their hearts, with a conscience, with the dazzling light of a rational nature, and with all the faculties and powers of free moral agency. But men have corrupted themselves. They have sinned against their God-given nature, and have come short of the glory of God. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Eccl. 7:29.

Finally, it should be emphasized that sin is never spoken of as a calamity or a misfortune in the Bible. It is spoken of as a crime and rebellion. But there could be no greater calamity or misfortune in heaven or in earth than that of being born sinners! If men were born sinners and could not help but sin, they would never be treated as criminals and rebels against the government of God. Instead, they would be considered of all the creatures of God, the most worthy of pity, sympathy, and compassion. They would be considered supremely unfortunate, and their sin the greatest misfortune and calamity in the universe.

If the sinner really were unfortunate, the Bible would have to be rewritten,

because it never speaks of the sinner as unfortunate or worthy of pity, but rather as being wicked and worthy of everlasting punishment. Remember how God judged wicked sinners in the days of Noah. He overthrew them with a flood and sent them quickly down to hell. Gen. 6:5-13. Now, it is absolutely unbelievable that God would do such a thing, if it were true that those sinners were born morally depraved and could not help but commit sin. Look how God judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon them and sent their wicked inhabitants down into hell. But if the filthy wickedness that was committed in those cities was the result of an inborn moral depravity, how could God possibly have sent them down into hell for their sins? Then, think of the multitudes upon multitudes of heathen who have died in their sins and gone down into hell, without a knowledge of the Gospel. It is incredible beyond imagination that God would send them to hell if they were born sinners and committed sin because of the nature with which they were born! No, the whole Bible would have to be rewritten if the doctrine of original sin were true because it contradicts the letter and the spirit of every page of the Scriptures.

I will call attention to two more passages from the Bible which show that men are created upright, with a good nature, and in the image and likeness of God:

He called them gods unto whom the Word of God came. John 10:35

I have said, ye are gods; and all of you are the children of the most high. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Psalm 82:6, 7

These passages, like the verse that says, "We are the offspring of God," are speaking of all mankind. They show that men are created as gods, that is that they "are made in the image of God" (Gen. 9:6), that they "are the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29), and that they "are the children of the most High" (Psalm 82:6). In showing the exalted state of men as gods, they also show the boundless guilt and ill-desert of men in corrupting themselves and falling from this exalted state. But if men are born into this world as sinners, they have not fallen at all, and there is no way that they can be guilty for their sins. It would be absurd to speak of the boundless guilt and ill-desert of sinners if they were born sinners. But if, as the Bible teaches, we are "the offspring of God," we are "the image and glory of God," we are "gods," and we are "the children of the most

High," and we have sinned against the image of God and the nature with which he created us, then we have a true idea of the enormity of our sin, the boundlessness of its guilt, and the greatness of God's mercy toward us in giving his Son to die for our sins.

It is a solemn fact that sinners will be punished for ever and ever in hell. This fact is a fearful illustration of the boundless guilt and ill-desert of sinners. But if it were really true that men were born sinners, they could not be guilty in the least for their sins. They would be unfortunate, yes, but not guilty. However, sin is not a misfortune. It is the greatest outrage in the universe. It is a crime against man's nature and rebellion against the Creator of our nature. God has measured the crime, the outrage, the guilt and the ill-desert of sin by its awful penalty: everlasting punishment in hell's fire!

They have corrupted themselves. Deut. 32:5

All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. Gen. 6:12

They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Psalm 14:3

The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. Gen. 8:21

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Rom. 3:23

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions. Eccl. 7:29

Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Rom. 7:17

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing. Rom. 7:18

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Rom. 7:20

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Rom. 7:23

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. Rom. 8:3

Chapter 5

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

Several objections have been made to the Bible doctrine of sin, which is the doctrine that men are created upright, and that they sin and corrupt themselves. Eccl. 7:29. The following is an attempt to answer these objections:

1. OBJECTION: We know from observation that babies are born with a sinful nature, because they fuss and scream, refuse to eat, go into a rage, throw tantrums, etc.

ANSWER: It is both morally and physically impossible to be born with a sinful nature. First, it is a moral impossibility because a baby cannot justly be a sinner by birth that a baby can be a sinner and guilty and condemned at birth is morally unthinkable! Second, it is a physical impossibility because sin is not a substance and so cannot be transmitted physically.

But we know that babies fuss and scream, refuse to eat, and throw tantrums before they know the difference between right and wrong. Do those who advocate the doctrine of original sin want to advance the argument that an inherited sin nature makes little babies sin before they even know what it is and before they know that they are sinning? This makes sin such a completely necessary, involuntary, and impersonal thing that there could never be any blame or guilt for it. If it is true that little babies sin because of a sinful nature and before they even know they are sinning, then it follows that they are completely automated and that their sin is completely necessary, involuntary, and impersonal. If all this were true, you could no more blame sinners for being sinners than you could blame a clock for striking the hour something it does impersonally, involuntarily, and necessarily because it was built to do so.

But babies fuss and scream, refuse to eat, throw tantrums, etc., not because of a sinful nature, but in response to pain and discomfort, the likes and dislikes of appetite, and the urges and desires of the sensibility. True, they do things which we think are selfish and sinful, and things which would in fact be selfish and sinful if they did them knowing them to be wrong. But while they have no knowledge of right and wrong, their

actions have no moral character, and therefore their actions are not and cannot be "sinful." It is only when a child's reason has developed and he has a clear understanding of right and wrong (an understanding of his accountability and the moral nature of his actions) that he becomes a moral agent and is responsible and accountable for his actions.

2. OBJECTION: We know from observation that sin is inherited because we see children inherit the sinful traits of their parents.

ANSWER: Children do inherit physical traits from their parents but they do not and cannot inherit moral traits or sin from their parents. Children only appear to inherit the moral traits of their parents. The whole home environment, with the continual example of parents and other family members, has an enormous influence upon a child's behavior; and it would be astonishing if children did not seem to inherit the moral traits of their parents, whether good or bad.

But those who will insist that the moral traits of the parents are inherited by the children must answer the questions: Why is it that many children "inherit" traits that are the exact opposite of their parents? Why is it that brothers and sisters in the same family will have moral traits the exact opposite of each other? Is the "inheritance" of sinful traits a hit or miss thing? The answer is that there is no such thing as inheritance of sinful traits. And, of course, we know that it is impossible to inherit either the good or bad moral traits of parents. There is nothing physical about sin; sin is a voluntary and personal act, and is non-transferable.

3. OBJECTION: But why is it always easier to sin than to do good? And why is it that all men do in fact sin? Doesn't this show that men are born with a sinful nature?

ANSWER: First, this objection assumes that since it is so easy to sin, and since sin is universal, this has to be explained by an inherited sin nature. But the Bible gives another explanation for the universal existence of sin: universal temptation.

But why is it so much easier to sin than to do good? It has always been easier to sin than to do good. Adam and Eve did not have a sinful nature, but they sinned just as easily as any of their descendants. What was it that caused them to sin so easily? It was not a sinful nature, it was temptation. Adam and Eve were tempted and they sinned so easily, so

naturally, so spontaneously that it would almost seem that they had a "sinful nature" before they sinned.

It has always been easier to sin than to resist temptation. James 1:12 says, "Blessed is he that endureth temptation." Heb. 2:18 says, "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted," and Heb. 12:4 says, he "resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

Christ "suffered" under temptation, not because of a sinful nature, but because resisting and overcoming temptation involves suffering. Adam and Eve did not resist temptation. That is why they sinned so easily. They took the easy way of pleasure and self-indulgence, which is always easier than the path of obedience to God.

But if the fact that it is easier to sin than to do right implies that men are born with a sinful nature, we would be left with the unscriptural conclusion that both Adam and Christ had sinful natures Adam, because he sinned so easily, naturally, and spontaneously; and Christ, because it was necessary for him to "endure," "suffer," "resist," and "strive" to overcome sin.

James tells us how all men are tempted. "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." James 1:14, 15. James explains here that all men are tempted through the desires of their sensibility. These constitutional desires and appetites are not sinful in themselves. They are merely the occasion to temptation, and it is only when they are gratified contrary to the law of God and reason that they become sinful. Adam and Eve had them before they sinned, or they could not have been tempted. Christ had them, or he was not a man and could not have been tempted as other men. But the Bible affirms that Christ was a man and that he was tempted in all points as other men, and yet without sin: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4:15.

Sin is universal, not because of an inherited sin nature, but because temptation is universal, and, because when men are tempted, they choose to indulge their own desires, rather than obey the law of God written in their hearts.

4. OBJECTION: But if men were not born sinners, it might be possible for someone to live their whole life absolutely free from sin, and they would not need to be saved by Christ, but could be saved by their works.

ANSWER: This objection reveals the sinister and ungodly nature of the original sin dogma. What does this objection imply? It implies that it would be criminal, wicked, and sinful for anyone to live a life without sin. It implies that men ought to be born with a sinful nature, lest it be possible for someone to live a life without sin! It implies that God wants men to be depraved sinners, that he wants them to be born with a sinful nature so that he can have the honor and glory of saving them. It implies that it would be impudence, arrogant pride, and high treason against God to live a life in humble obedience to God and never rebel against him. It implies that God would be insulted and dishonored if someone obeyed God all his life and never sinned against him. It implies that to please and glorify God we must be forced to displease and dishonor him. In a word, it implies that it would be sinful to be free to obey God. And why? Because if we were free to obey God, someone might do it and would not need to be saved. What logic! But this is an example of the type of reasoning that must be resorted to in order to defend the dogma of original sin. But we have already seen that if men are not free, and if they sin by a necessity of their nature, they cannot be responsible for their actions and their actions cannot have moral character anymore than a gun that is used to commit murder can have moral character. What? A man who must sin necessarily because of an inherited sin nature responsible and guilty for what he cannot avoid? If it were true that we were born with a nature that deprived us of the liberty and ability to obey God (which is the doctrine of Augustine and original sin), if it were true that we were born with a nature that made us disobey God, and if it were true that we were created by God under a law that made us by nature sinners and rebels, we could never in justice be blamed or punished for our sins. If we were unable by nature to obey God, sin would not be a crime, but rather a calamity. Words in the Bible like pardon and mercy would have no meaning. God would be cruel and a tyrant for condemning the unfortunate sinner to hell for what he could not avoid. The offer of mercy and pardon to the sinner would be an insult. The truth is that the doctrine of natural inability to obey God makes all the doctrines of the Bible absurd and irrational.

But the objection we are considering both assumes and demands that

men be born with the natural inability to obey God, and it imputes the onus of pride, self-righteousness, and even the despising of God's gracious plan of salvation to the person who will not swallow all the absurdities of the original sin dogma. One form of this objection is put in the following insinuating question: "So you think that a person is able to live his whole life without sinning and that he can be saved by his good works?" But the stigma of pride and self-righteousness does not belong to the one who rejects the dogma of original sin, for to recognize and admit that one is the author of his own sins, that he is guilty for them, and that he is worthy of being sent to hell for them is not self-righteousness, nor is it despising God's gracious plan of salvation. It is just the opposite. It is humbling one's self in view of the guilt of one's sins, and it is acknowledging one's need of God's mercy and salvation in view of one's deserved punishment for his sins.

How ridiculous and absurd, then, is the objection that "men cannot be free and able to obey God, because if they were able, there would always be the possibility that someone might do it and would not need to be saved"! How foolish is the notion that God would be insulted, profoundly humiliated, and his government subverted and overturned if men could and did obey him! What supreme foolishness is the objection that "Someone might possibly live his whole life without sin." What! Would it really be a sin to not sin? Would it be wicked to be free and have the ability to obey God? Would God be insulted, dishonored, and confounded if someone in his kingdom lived all his life without sinning against him? Would he consider it a catastrophe of the first magnitude if someone actually did love and obey him perfectly from the cradle to the grave? It is impossible! God does not have that kind of character.

5. OBJECTION: But Paul taught that the flesh is sinful and that sin dwells in the flesh. He spoke of "sin that dwelleth in me." Rom. 7:17. He said, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Rom. 7:18. And he spoke of "sin which is in my members." Rom. 7:23.

ANSWER: It is true that Paul uses language in these texts that appears to teach the doctrine of a sinful, physical constitution. But the language that Paul uses is not literal; it is figurative. When the Apostle speaks of the flesh in the sense of being sinful, he is never speaking of the flesh in its literal or physical sense. This is evident from the following verses in Romans:

For when we were in the flesh... Rom. 7:5

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Rom. 8:8

But ye are not in the flesh. Rom. 8:9

Paul teaches in these verses that the Christian is no longer "in the flesh." This makes it clear that when Paul spoke of the "flesh" in the sense of sin, he was not referring to the physical flesh because if he were, the only way that we could no longer be "in the flesh" would be to no longer be in the body. But Paul was not teaching some strange new doctrine that Christians were now disembodied spirits. He was rather teaching that they were no longer living to gratify their fleshly desires. They were no longer living in sin.

Our flesh and our bodies are not sinful in themselves, but they can be the occasion to temptation, and we can give in to temptation and present our bodies as instruments to sin, but it is we ourselves, living in our bodies, who are sinful or righteous, according to the use we make of our bodies. Rom. 6:12, 13, 19; Rom. 12:1; I Cor. 6:12, 15, 19, 20.

Paul did not condemn the flesh of man. He did not in any way condemn the physical nature of man. This is evident because he thought of our Lord Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, as a real man with human flesh. He believed in the resurrection and a life in the body afterwards. He taught that the body of man is properly the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that the body is an offering acceptable and holy to God when consecrated to his service. He taught, also, that the body is an instrument of righteousness for the Christian, and finally, he said that those who are now new creatures in Christ Jesus are no longer "in the flesh," making us understand that when he condemned the flesh and spoke of it in a derogatory way, he was not speaking of the physical flesh. Paul uses the word "flesh" to mean something very different from the physical flesh. He uses it to speak of the sinful condition of men who are completely given over to worldly and fleshly desires. And the fact that he uses the word "flesh" to speak of a past state for the Christian, telling the Christian that he is no longer "in the flesh," shows that he is not speaking of the "flesh" in its literal, physical sense. Rom. 7:5; Rom. 8:8-9.

The Apostle Paul uses this kind of figurative language throughout his epistle to the Romans. He personifies both sin and grace in Rom. 5:21

and has both sin and grace reigning at different times. He has the believer crucified and dead with Christ in Romans chapter six, and then in the same chapter, he has the believer resurrected to new life after his death and burial with Christ. But Paul did not intend for any of this to be understood in a literal or physical sense. The Christian is not literally and physically crucified with Christ. He does not literally die. He is not literally buried with Christ. Nor is he afterwards literally raised from the dead. Paul was speaking of spiritual realities and not physical realities here, and he uses the language of figure to express these spiritual realities. And so, likewise in the verses that speak of sin dwelling in his members (Rom. 7:17, 18, 23), Paul is using figurative language and does not at all mean to teach the doctrine of constitutional sinfulness.

The language of figure is used throughout the Bible. Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 16:17, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Paul said in Galatians 1:16, "I conferred not with flesh and blood." Jude said, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garments spotted by the flesh." Jude 23. Again, Jesus said, "Take up the cross and follow me." Mark 10:21. The writer to the Hebrews refers to "the blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb. 12:24. These are just a few of the numerous texts of the Bible that contain figurative language. We all know that Christ was not speaking of a literal wooden cross when he commanded us to take up our cross and follow him. We know, therefore, that Christ was speaking of it in a figurative sense. We all know that blood cannot speak. We know, therefore, that the blood of Abel and Christ speak in a figurative sense.

In the same way we know that blood does not speak, we also know that sin is not a substance or a virus or anything physical. We know that sin is not something that lives or has personality. We know that sin is a wicked choice or a wicked act committed by the sinner. It is an act or a choice that transgresses God's law and, apart from the sinner who commits the act or makes the choice, sin does not exist. Therefore, when the Bible speaks of sin as if it existed with a personality all its own and was living and dwelling and reigning in the body of the sinner, we know that the language is figurative. Its meaning is that the sinner is a slave to his lusts, that he is ruled by his passions and desires. But to teach from such texts that sin is a virus, a physical thing that can be transmitted from parents to offspring, is to ignore reality and the teaching of the Word of God on the

nature of sin. Every kind of foolish and superstitious belief can be proved from the Bible if it is not interpreted according to the demands of context, language, common sense, and reality. (An illustration of this is the passage in Romans 7:24-25, which is wrongly used to teach that the Apostle Paul himself was in bondage to sin at the time he wrote his epistle to the Romans.)

Finally, those who insist that the phrases "sin that dwelleth in me" and "sin which is in my members" speak of a literal, physical fact, to be consistent, must interpret all the language of chapters 6, 7, and 8 of Romans as literal, physical fact. They must, to be consistent, teach that the Christian literally is "not in the flesh," that is, they must teach that the Christian has no body and that since the time of his salvation, he has been a disembodied spirit. To be consistent, they must teach that the Christian literally and physically was "crucified with Christ" and was "buried with Christ" and was raised from the dead to live again. And to be consistent, they must teach that all Christians are literally living in dead bodies: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin..." Rom. 8:10

But of course, all those who plead for the doctrine of original sin know that these verses are figurative and are used to speak of moral and spiritual changes in the believer. Then why will they not be consistent enough to take the verses in chapter 7 which speak of "sin that dwelleth in me" and "sin which is in my members" as being figurative? It can only be because of a prepossessed belief in the man-made doctrine of original sin.

6. OBJECTION: The Bible says that Levi paid tithes while yet in the loins of his father Abraham. Heb. 7:9-10. This shows that we sinned in Adam; for we were yet in his loins when he sinned.

ANSWER: But in what sense did Levi pay tithes while yet in the loins of his father Abraham? It was not in an absolute sense, which would have been impossible, because Levi had no personal existence at the time, but only in a typical sense. The point that the writer to the Hebrews wanted to make was that the Levitical priesthood was inferior to, and superseded by, the priesthood of Christ, who had an unending priesthood "after the order of Melchisedec," and to prove that the Levitical priesthood was inferior to that of Christ, he points out that Levi had descended from

Abraham, who, as great as he was, had still paid tithes to Melchisedec, so that Levi also, as a descendant of Abraham (yet in the loins of Abraham when he paid tithes), was also inferior and subservient to Melchisedec and his priesthood. And in this typical sense only, as a descendant of one who had shown he was inferior and subservient to Melchisedec by paying tithes to him, had Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec.

The writer to the Hebrews shows that he is speaking of Levi paying tithes in Abraham in a typical sense by the language he uses. He says, "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham." Heb. 7:19. The phrase "as I may so say" is a limiting or qualifying phrase, which means "I could say," or "I might say." The writer to the Hebrews never gave to his statement about Levi any other than a typical sense, otherwise he would not have limited his statement with the words, "And as I may so say..." Heb. 7:19.

To teach from this passage that either the good or the evil that our ancestors have done is actually done by us is to wrest this passage from its context and to torture it into teaching utter nonsense. For instance, such an idea would make all the descendants of a Christian automatic Christians if his children were yet in his loins when he believed. Also, it would seem to make all the descendants of one who rejects the Gospel automatic unbelievers for coming out of the loins of an unbelieving father. In fact, if this theory is true, every good act of a man or every evil act of a man is counted as done by all of his offspring. But the problem with all of this is that we know that many godly men have had descendants who were enemies of God and vice versa. Abraham is an example of this. The Bible says that Abraham believed God and that his faith was counted unto him for righteousness, and Abraham is called the father of the faithful because of his faith. But Abraham has had millions upon millions of descendants who have not believed and have been lost. Yet according to the theory under question, all of Abraham's descendants should have been justified by his faith, for they were all yet in his loins when he believed God and was justified. Esau was a descendant of Abraham but God said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Rom. 9:13. God destroyed the children of Israel (who were descendants of Abraham) in the wilderness for their unbelief, even though they were "yet in the loins of Abraham" when he believed.

The problems with this nonsensical theory multiply when you realize that

everyone of us have been "in the loins" of numerous ancestors going all the way back to Adam. This means that we actually participated in all the good and evil not only of Adam, but also of all our intervening ancestors as well. What an awful lot of good and evil we have done. We have all been busy for thousands of years in the loins of our ancestors doing good and evil!

Now, do we get to pick and choose among our ancestors, choosing the ancestors whose deeds we like most, or must we heap them all together and take what they all have done? I am afraid that to do the latter would make our character quite a confused and conflicting thing. What if some of our ancestors were Christians and others were unrepentant sinners? Would we balance the good ones out against the bad ones and come up with what was left over?

But the whole idea of sinning in Adam is a theological fiction that has been perpetuated to a large extent by Jerome's erroneous translation in the Latin Vulgate of Romans 5:12. He translated the Greek phrase eph o pantes hemarton by the Latin phrase in quo omnes peccaverunt, which means in whom all have sinned. This translation was in error, and Greek students agree that it was. Nevertheless, this error has helped to form and perpetuate the false doctrine that men actually sinned in Adam when he sinned.

The teaching that men sinned in Adam directly contradicts the Bible's plain teaching that men sin in themselves and not in someone else, and there is no other way that men can sin. Paul spoke in Romans 5:14 of "them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Paul referred here to those who had sinned before the giving of the law and so had not sinned against a positive precept as Adam had, but only against the law of conscience and reason. Paul said they were sinners, but the fact that he said they had "not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" shows that Paul did not consider the sin of Adam to be their sin. Then in Romans 9:11, Paul, speaking of Jacob and Esau in the womb of their mother Rebecca, says, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil..." Now here were two very remarkable children who for thousands of years had been in the loins of ancestors all the way from Adam through Abraham and Isaac, and during all those thousands of years of being in the loins of different ancestors, they had never done anything good or evil. This astonishing fact is hard

to reconcile with the idea that every human being was supposed to have actually sinned in Adam, and that Levi actually paid tithes in Abraham.

7. OBJECTION: But the Bible does teach that God condemns the children for the sins of the fathers. It says, "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Ex. 20:5.

ANSWER: It is true that this text would seem to teach that God condemns the children for the sins of their fathers, but the text itself shows that God does not visit the iniquity of the fathers upon innocent children. It is only upon those children who hate and disobey him that he visits the iniquity of the fathers.

First, we have many direct statements in the Bible which teach that God does not punish the children for the sins of the fathers. Since we have these statements, they should alert us to the fact that, if there is another scripture that seems to contradict them, somewhere we have either taken the scripture out of its context or in some other way misinterpreted it. Let us look first at some of the direct statements teaching that God does not punish the children for the sins of their fathers:

What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, sayeth the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel...Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?...The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Ez. 18:2, 3, 19, 20

Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like...he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. Ez. 8: 14, 17

The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin. Deut. 24:16

But he slew not their children, but did as it is written in the law of the book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every

man shall die for his own sin. II Chron. 25:4

From the above passages we know that it is contrary to the character of God to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon those who are innocent. When God said in Ex. 20:5 that he would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, he was not talking of innocent or godly children. He was talking of wicked and ungodly children who were following the wicked example of their fathers. This is seen directly from the text itself, which says, "unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." The iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate God, and not upon children who are innocent and obedient to God.

Other Scriptures testify to this as well. God did not judge the innocent children of the Israelites for the sin and unbelief of their fathers. Deut. 1:39. There were wicked kings who had godly sons, and God did not judge their sons but blessed them. II Chron. Chapters 28-35. Also, Ez. 18:14, 17 declare: "Now, lo, if he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like...he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live." All of chapter 18 of Ezekiel is written to show that the godly do not have the iniquity of their fathers visited upon them, and that every man is condemned and judged only for his own sins. The only way that the iniquity of the fathers can be visited upon the children is for the children to walk in the sins of the fathers, for to follow in the steps of our father's sins is to approve what they have done. Jesus himself taught this:

Wherefore be ye witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Matt. 23:31-35

Jesus makes the amazing statement in this passage that the scribes and Pharisees would be guilty of all the righteous blood shed upon the earth,

from the righteous blood of Abel right on down to the righteous blood of Zacharias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar. Now, the scribes and Pharisees did not actually slay Zacharias the son of Barachias, but they had the heart of a murderer, and in a few short days they crucified the Son of God. The man who willfully takes the life of another man is giving tacit approval to every murder that has ever been committed or that ever will be committed. The rapist gives his approval to every act of rape committed, just as much as if he had committed those acts. And Jesus taught the compounded guilt of those children, who, knowing the guilt of their fathers, go on and break the same commandments. To commit the sins of our fathers is to justify their sins. It is to give tacit approval to their wickedness, and so to justly deserve that the iniquity of our fathers should be visited upon us. God never visits the iniquity of the fathers upon those who are innocent. God is just and so cannot condemn the children for the sins of their fathers, except when they willfully follow the wicked example of their fathers.

8. OBJECTION: But God can condemn the whole human race for the sin of Adam if he wants to. God is sovereign and can do anything he wants.

ANSWER: It is true that God is sovereign, but it is not true that he is sovereign in the grotesque sense in which the advocates of original sin make him out to be. To say that God is sovereign in the sense that he can work injustice, unrighteousness, and sin is to slander the holy name of God.

The idea that God's sovereignty gives him the liberty to work unrighteousness is blasphemous and contrary to scripture: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Gen. 18:25. God is not sovereign and has never claimed to be sovereign in such a grotesque sense. But the doctrine of the above objection is that God can do what all men know to be unjust that is, condemn the whole human race for the sin of one man and still be just and righteous because he is sovereign. It is unbelievable that Christians, in order to defend the doctrine of original sin, would so demean the character of God. Sheldon says:

The same God whose penetrating glance burns away every artifice with which a man may enwrap himself, and reaches at once to the naked reality, is represented as swathing His judgment with a gigantic artifice, in that He holds countless millions guilty of a trespass which He knows was

committed before their personal existence, and which they could no more prevent than they could hinder the fiat of creation. If this is justice, then justice is a word of unknown meaning. Sane men condemn the savagery of the tribe which treats all of a nation as enemies because one or more of its representatives has offended. Shall sane men, then, think of the holy God as condemning a race in advance of its existence because of the sin of one? God's ways are indeed above man's. But they must be supposed to lie in the direction of man's best conceptions of justice and righteousness. To impute an unethical arbitrariness to God is to assail faith in the very idea of a perfect being.

Those who heartily believe in the doctrine of original sin and believe that God condemned the whole human race for the sin of Adam "because he is sovereign and can do whatever he wants to" must have about the same concept of God as the heathen had of their false gods. They must fear him because he is sovereign and has infinite power over them. However, it must be difficult to love him with the overflowing love that comes from a confidence and a delight in his moral perfections, since they believe a doctrine that requires them to make the excuse that "God can do anything he wants because he is sovereign."

God cannot make evil become good and good become evil by a sovereign decree. He is not sovereign in the sense that his "might makes right." He cannot make a law that says, "Thou shalt lie, steal, blaspheme my holy name, commit adultery, work evil, and hate your fellow man." God is sovereign, but he cannot do anything sinful or unjust just "because he is sovereign." The universal law of love and righteousness is his law as much as it is the law of all his creatures. God does not make evil right by an arbitrary decree, and for him to sovereignly decree a law which were contrary to his nature and the nature of his creatures would be as much sin in him as it would be in any of his creatures. God cannot and will not sin against the righteousness of his nature. He will not put darkness for light, falsehood for truth, evil for good, or unrighteousness for righteousness.

To defend the obvious unrighteousness of the original sin dogma by saying that "God can do whatever he wants because he is sovereign" is to demean the holy name of God. The doctrine of original sin is infinitely dishonorable to God. It makes him arbitrary, tyrannical, unjust, and cruel in his sovereignty. God has never claimed to be sovereign in an arbitrary

sense, in the sense that he can do whatever he wills, even if it is unholy, unjust, or unrighteousness. God is sovereign, and justly so, because all his ways conform to truth, holiness, and righteousness.

9. OBJECTION: You depend too much on reason. You should only use the Scriptures to prove the doctrines of the Bible. If you depend on reason, you will be led into error.

ANSWER: Would the advocates of the doctrine of original sin object to reason if the doctrine of original sin were reasonable? Why do the advocates of original sin object to reason? It is because the dogma of original sin contradicts reason! If our reason told us that it would be just for a whole race to be condemned for the sin of one man, would they then object to reason? If our reason told us that the heathen could justly be born sinners, commit sin because of an inborn sin nature, die in their sins without a knowledge of the gospel and a chance to be saved, and then be justly condemned to the everlasting punishment of hell, would they then object to reason? If our reason told us that moral character or sin, with its guilt and condemnation, could be passed on in the physical constitution of man, would they then object to reason? If our reason told us that a non-moral and non-personal entity called "flesh" could, contrary to its nature, take on personality and moral character and be sinful, would they then object to reason? No. They object to reason because they know the original sin dogma is absurd and unreasonable.

In regard to using only the Scriptures to prove the doctrines of the Bible, almost any false doctrine can be proved by quoting texts from the Bible, if those texts are quoted without paying attention to context and language. We can confirm this fact by pointing to the many false cults which appeal to Bible texts in order to verify their false teachings. So, should we object to reason when it tells us that a doctrine cannot be true that is supported by proof-texts from the Bible which have been taken out of context, and which are used without any regard to literal or figurative language or the general theme of the passage from which they are taken, and which then "prove" a doctrine that directly contradicts many other clear texts and fundamental doctrines of the Bible? Must we throw out reason when we come to the Bible? Is there something inherently evil about the faculty of reason? Are ordinary common sense and the understanding that God has given us to be despised and rejected when we come to the Bible? No! The Scriptures never require us to believe anything which the

constitution of our own nature as created by God forces us to reject as false, unjust, or impossible. The fundamental truths of Christianity cannot be in manifest contradiction to reason, and yet the original sin dogma does contradict reason and man's irresistible convictions of justice.

10. OBJECTION: In the Bible, the word sin in the singular refers to a sin principle that dwells in us, or to original sin; and the word sins in the plural refers to "actual sins" that flow from the sin principle we have inherited from Adam.

ANSWER: Some advocates of original sin try to make out a distinction in the Bible between "sin" in the singular and "sins" in the plural. According to them, the word sin in the singular refers to the "sin principle," the "Adamic sin nature," "inbred sin," or "original sin," but the word "sins" in the plural refers to the acts of sin that flow from the "Adamic nature" or the "principle of sin" that dwells in man's flesh. This distinction between "sin" in the singular and "sins" in the plural is completely artificial and unbiblical. There is no mention of such a distinction in the Bible.

There is a biblical sense in which sin is and must be a principle. It is a principle because it flows from a single ruling choice of the heart or will. Rom. 7:17; Rom. 7:23; Rom. 8:2, 6, 7, 10. Both Jesus and the Apostles taught that there can only be one ruling choice of the heart or will at a time. If the choice or principle that controls the life is selfishness, all the volitions and acts of the life will be selfish. If the ruling choice of the heart is love to God and others, all the volitions and acts of the life will be virtuous. Two opposing choices or principles cannot control the life at the same time. One must be given up for the other. "No man can serve two masters." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matt. 6:24. The following verses of the Bible teach the truth that all the acts of men proceed from one single governing choice of the heart, and that, therefore, there cannot be a divided or partial service to God:

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. Matt. 12:33-35 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth

evil fruit, a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Matt.7:17,18

Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either the vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. James 3:11, 12

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Matt. 6:22-24

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust in much. Luke 16:10

Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. James 2:10

All sin and all virtue flow from the fountainhead of the heart or will. When the heart is committed to the supreme and ultimate choice of selfishness, all the outworkings of that one ruling choice will be to gratify self in the various forms that selfishness may take. A selfish person cannot please or obey God because all his acts, even though many may be outwardly righteous, are motivated by a heart consecrated to self. Paul said, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. 8:7, 8. The "carnal mind" in this passage is speaking of a ruling preference of the heart that is carnal, selfish, or sinful. While a man has a "carnal mind" it is impossible for him to obey God, please God, or do anything good.

All sin is a unit and all virtue is a unit that flows from one supreme and ultimate choice of the will. There cannot be two opposite choices ruling the life at the same time. There cannot be a mixed or a partial consecration and service to God. There can only be one single governing choice of the heart; either love to God and others rule the life, or selfishness rules the life.

Many people in the churches today are deceived on this point. They believe that God can and does accept a partial consecration of their life

to him. but God will accept nothing less than a total dedication of ourselves to him, according to our knowledge of his will. James 2:10; Luke 14:26, 27, 33. Anything less than a total dedication of what we know to be the will of God is motivated by selfishness, and "if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." Matt. 6:23. 11. OBJECTION: The doctrine of original sin has been believed by the Church Universal for almost 2000 years. How could you and a few others be right, and everyone else be wrong?

ANSWER: This objection is considered by many to be conclusive "How could the Church Universal be in error for almost 2000 years? How could you be right and everyone else be wrong?"

The multitudes have been wrong before while the few have been right, and the Church Universal has been wrong before, protecting and giving sanction to error while resisting and persecuting the few who have proclaimed the truth. Copernicus and Galileo are well-known examples of this. Galileo taught the truth that the sun does not go around the earth, but that the earth goes around the sun, and that the earth spins upon its axis, giving the illusion that the sun is going around the earth. But even though he taught the truth, the church resisted it and persecuted him because from the second century A.D. on, the church had believed the theory of Ptolemy that the earth was the unmoving center of the universe, and that the sun moved around the earth. Copernicus had already proven that the theory of Ptolemy was wrong, but the church rejected his proof because it did not fit in with what it had believed for 1400 years. Galileo then constructed a telescope and was able to demonstrate that Copernicus was right and that Ptolemy had been wrong all those 1400 years. Instead of saying, "Thank you for correcting our wrong beliefs," the Church Universal promptly put Copernicus' work on its index of prohibited books and warned Galileo to abandon his opinions and to abstain from teaching, defending, or discussing them anymore. Galileo invited some scientists and members of the Catholic clergy to look into his telescope and prove for themselves that what he had said was the truth, but some of them refused because they were afraid that their beliefs would be proven wrong. Galileo was persistent and wrote a book proving the falseness of the view which had been held by the Church Universal for 1400 years. This brought him under the wrath of the church. His book was banned by the church, he was tried and found guilty by the Church

Inquisition, he was compelled to recant of all his Copernican doctrines, and he spent the last eight years of his life under house arrest. It was 200 years later, in 1835, that the works of Copernicus and Galileo were finally removed from the Church's index of prohibited books.

So the idea that the many are always right, and the few are always wrong is false and invalid. If the argument that "the many must be right and the few must be wrong" is valid and conclusive, then Martin Luther and the other Reformers were totally deceived, and the whole Protestant Movement is a false movement built upon error. For Martin Luther and a few other Reformers stood alone against the whole Church Universal to overthrow errors that had been taught and believed for almost 1,500 years. There are other examples, as well. Jesus stood alone against the man-made traditions and prejudiced teachings of the whole Jewish Ecclesiastical Body of the Scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the High Priests. Also, the idea that the earth was flat and that sailors were in danger of sailing off the edge of the world was a universal belief for hundreds of years.

The idea that "the majority must be right" or that "long held tradition is proof of truth" is not a logical conclusion. And when evidence is presented which shows that a long held view is in error or that a view held by the majority is in error, it should not be rejected by appealing to the false logic that "a belief held by the majority for a long time is proof of its truth."

12. OBJECTION: The Jews believed in the doctrine of original sin at the time of Jesus. They said to the man born blind: "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" John 9:34. This verse shows that the doctrine of original sin is true.

ANSWER: This verse does not teach that there was a belief in the doctrine of original sin at the time of Jesus, nor does it teach that the religious leaders believed in original sin. If anything, it teaches the exact opposite, because if the religious leaders had believed in original sin, they would have been forced to say something like this: "Well, you have as much right to teach us as we do to teach you, since we are all, altogether born in sins." But they were not, in any way, including themselves in this thing of being "altogether born in sins." They were excluding themselves and limiting it only to the man born blind.

What they really were saying was this: "You're a vile, despicable sinner, and you presume to teach us? We are holy and righteous before God and will you who was altogether born in sins presume to teach us?" They were not teaching the doctrine of original sin anymore than David taught it when he said of himself, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." In fact, they meant to say the same thing about the man born blind that David meant to say about himself. David meant to say that he was a vile and despicable sinner and guilty before God, and they meant to say the same thing about the man born blind. But they, in no way, meant to include themselves with the man born blind and teach that they also were "altogether born in sins."

The above text no more teaches the doctrine of original sin than the question the disciples asked Christ teaches it. "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Christ answered their question with the words, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents." John 9:3.

We must be careful not to make doctrines out of either the statements of false religious leaders or the speculative questions of Christ's disciples.

In darkness it lurks behind a mask of decency and respectability fashioned of biblical proof-texts.

It cringes and pulls away when the brilliant light of Bible truth falls upon it.

It retreats to the shadows when the dazzling light of reason and common sense approaches.

It flees and hides from the glaring gaze of close scrutiny.

And there in the darkness it skulks, fearful that its mask be torn away, and it, at last, without its covering, wither and die under the burning light of truth.

--Tom Overstreet

Chapter 6

HOW A FALSE DOCTRINE COULD PERSIST SO LONG

How could it be possible for the doctrine of original sin to persist so long if it were false? Would not God long ago have purged his church from such an error? No, God permits men to cling to darkness and error for as long as they will. The Dark Ages and the visible church are a sad testimony to that fact. The church should have been a light to the world, but instead it was filled with darkness, superstition, and error; a heathen doctrine of purgatory; an unbiblical papacy and priesthood with its priestly rituals; the selling and buying of indulgences for sin; the worship of Mary, saints, pictures, images, and relics; the ascribing of magical powers to water, to sacred words, to signs and places, to amulets and relics, and to certain rites and ceremonies; works of penance for forgiveness of sins; and water baptism for the remission of sins. Darkness, superstition, and error reigned in the church, and when a little light did spring up, it was resisted and put down as heresy. Throughout the Dark Ages, the church sanctioned and protected the grossest kinds of superstitions and errors. And God permitted this superstition and error to exist and continue in the visible church for well over a thousand years.

I have already referred to the church's stubborn rejection of truth in the forgoing chapter, and it bears repeating in connection with this chapter. Copernicus and Galileo brought to the church the truth that the earth was not the center of the universe and was not without motion, and that the sun did not go around the earth, but that the earth rotated on its axis and went around the sun. However, the church had believed and taught for well over a thousand years that the earth stood still, and that the sun went around the earth. So they rejected the truth that these men taught and persisted in their long-held error.

Then Martin Luther stood up against the ecclesiastical corruption and false teachings of the church. He wanted reformation in the church, but the church rejected the light that Martin Luther tried to bring to it and Luther was forced to work for reform outside the Catholic Church. So

God permitted the church to go on in its error. The idea that God will not permit false doctrine to exist in the church is just not true and is repudiated by both church history and the Bible.

It is regrettable that Martin Luther did not perceive all the errors that existed in the Catholic Church. For he, along with Calvin, still believed in the dogma of original sin, and he, as well as Calvin, still believed that the earth stood still and that the sun went around the earth every 24 hours.

Martin Luther called Copernicus an 'upstart astrologer' and a 'fool who wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy.' Calvin thundered: 'Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?' Do not Scriptures say that Joshua commanded the sun and not the earth to stand still? That the sun runs from one end of the heavens to the other?

So while Martin Luther and Calvin both rejected many of the errors of the Catholic Church, they also both still clung to some of its errors. Why? Because of their ignorance.

Both Calvin and Martin Luther were completely ignorant about astronomy. They did not think they were ignorant. They professed to know much more about it than Copernicus. They thought that their false views were true because they were supported by long-held tradition, and they could quote Scripture texts to support them. And Christians today also think that the doctrine of original sin is true because it is supported by long-held tradition, and they can quote proof-texts from the Bible to prove it. Because of their ignorance, they will stand with righteous indignation against those who declare the dogma of original sin to be false, just like Calvin and Luther, because of their ignorance, stood with righteous indignation against the truth as taught by Copernicus.

There is grave ignorance among Christians respecting the doctrine of original sin. Most Christians would have to admit that they are completely ignorant about the following facts:

1. That the doctrine of original sin is a historical doctrine. It became a doctrine of the Catholic Church in the 5th century A.D.
2. That it has evolved as a doctrine and that it had its roots in a heathen philosophy.

3. That it is really only a theory, and further, that there is not one, but several contradicting theories of original sin.
4. That there is grave disagreement among the theologians who support the different theories of original sin, and that they are all able to prove each other's theories to be false.
5. That, although the doctrine of original sin was foisted on the church by Augustine, much of the credit for the acceptance of the doctrine must go to the changing winds of church politics and power. Not only the doctrine of original sin, but several other doctrines of the church see-sawed back and forth in their acceptance or rejection according to the caprices of politics, power, and influence of the state and church.
6. Most Christians are ignorant of the fact that Pelagius and Celestus were inadvertently a great help to Augustine in foisting his doctrine of original sin on the church. In fact, without their role, it may never have taken hold in the church. Pelagius and Celestus withstood Augustine's views on original sin, natural inability, and a necessitated will. But in rejecting original sin, they had to teach that infants are without sin, which meant that there was no need of infant baptism. Churchmen at that time were strongly prejudiced for infant baptism, so the implication involved in a denial of original sin (that there was no need for infant baptism) shocked them, raising opposition to the teachings of Pelagius and Celestus and making Augustine's doctrine of original sin, natural inability, a necessitated will, and irresistible grace much more palatable. Although the position of Celestus on the lack of a need for infant baptism was Scriptural; nevertheless, the churchmen's strong prejudice for infant baptism caused the controversy to erupt. And this point in which Celestus and Pelagius were right drew much more attention in the controversy than several other points in which Celestus and Pelagius decidedly took unscriptural positions. Therefore, the Augustinian doctrine of original sin was not made a dogma of the Catholic Church because of its truth or merits, but because Pelagianism rejected infant baptism and was in gross error in its denial of the need of a special divine grace if men are to be saved and delivered from sin. Pelagius and Celestus held such ridiculously unbiblical views of sin and of man's ability to obey God without grace that it was actually easy for Augustine to show that their views were false. Thus the rejection by Celestus and Pelagius of infant baptism, and their rejection of the need for a special divine grace if men

are to be saved and delivered from sin captured all the attention of the churchmen's minds and diverted their attention from the absurdities of the original sin doctrine as taught by Augustine.

7. Most Christians are ignorant of exactly what Augustine taught as the doctrine of original sin, as well as what Cocceius, Placeus, and Arminius taught as their doctrines of original sin. If they were told exactly what Augustine taught, they would be shocked and would refuse to believe it.

8. Most Christians are ignorant of the fact that the doctrine of original sin is a patently unbiblical doctrine. It directly contradicts scores of Biblical texts and both the spirit and the letter of all the fundamental doctrines of the Bible.

9. Most Christians are ignorant of the fact that it is both morally and physically impossible to be born a sinner.

10. And finally, most Christians would have to admit that they are ignorant of the shocking teachings and implications that grow out of the doctrine of original sin. For instance, the teachings that God creates sinners, that infants who die go to hell, and the logical implication that if all men are born sinners, then Jesus himself was born a sinner.

The fact is that Christians are woefully ignorant of the origin and evil nature of this doctrine, and it is this ignorance that protects and perpetuates it. There are several factors that work together to make this ignorance possible. I will name five.

First, the spirit of the new Christian is receptive. He does not have a spirit of debate about things he may not understand. New Christians naturally tend to accept everything they are taught as gospel truth because they have a pliable and teachable spirit. They may not understand this new doctrine, and they may question its justice; nevertheless, their receptive and teachable spirit prevents them from objecting and arguing about it. They are not prone to question or reject authority. Their pliable and teachable spirit makes them receptive even to a doctrine that contradicts their convictions of justice.

Second, the doctrine of original sin is made believable to the new Christian because of proof-texts from the Bible. He does not know that these proof-texts are taken out of context or misinterpreted. He probably has little knowledge of the Bible and deep trust in those who teach him.

Add to this his love of God and his trust in God's Word, so that when proof-texts from the Bible are given in support of the doctrine of original sin, the question is settled for him if the Bible teaches it, then it has to be so.

Third, once confirmed in a belief it is almost impossible to change that belief. Who has not experienced or observed how Christians, once taught to believe a certain way, are strongly prejudiced for the view they have first been taught? An illustration of this is the blind zeal with which Christians of different denominations will argue over doctrinal differences. A Baptist is not likely to give a fair hearing to Pentecostal doctrine. Neither is a Pentecostal likely to give a fair hearing to Baptist doctrine. To change the beliefs of one who has once been indoctrinated is almost impossible. He may be in error, but he is prejudiced against every argument that he hears. This prejudice against any teaching that contradicts what we have already been taught protects and perpetuates any error that we may hold.

Fourth, the very fact that the doctrine of original sin is almost universally believed and that it has been believed for so long tends strongly to perpetuate it. Universal adherence to error throws up an almost impenetrable barrier against light and truth when they are offered. Moreover, universal adherence to error presents an almost overwhelming restraint to the person who would defect and stand alone against the masses to speak for truth. There is a feeling of safety and assurance in numbers. No one likes to stand alone. It is because of this that, even in the church, universal adherence to error has had an overwhelming tendency to perpetuate itself. Add to this the entrenched ignorance and superstition that truth must expose before it can be received and embraced as truth.

Fifth, a deficient ministry helps to perpetuate ignorance and error among Christians. Ministers are certainly more blameworthy than laypeople for ignorance, superstition, and prejudicial beliefs, because their very calling is to preach and teach the truth to others. But often there is a conceit among ministers that does not exist among laypeople. Because they are ministers, they feel they do not need to be taught, and they resist more firmly than laypeople any idea that they might be in error. A true Christian spirit, and a spirit that would be in accord with their responsibility to preach the truth would, it seems, cause them to hear the arguments and

to investigate the question until they might be sure of either the truth or falseness of the original sin dogma. But, sadly, there is generally such a prejudiced opinion and such self-satisfaction that ministers do not investigate, and they continue to perpetuate a false doctrine in the church of Jesus Christ.

The idea is erroneous that, if the doctrine of original sin were false, God would long ago have purged it from his church. Martin Luther could easily have said the same thing about the errors that existed in the Catholic Church. These were errors that had been universally believed and practiced in the church for well over a thousand years. Martin Luther knew they were errors and unbiblical practices, and he cried out against them and was finally used by God to bring light and truth to the church, where before there had been darkness, superstition, and error.

Chapter 7

THIRTEEN REASONS WHY THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN IS FALSE

**Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you,
neither shall ye diminish ought from it. Deut. 4:2**

**If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add
unto him the plagues that are written in this book.
Rev. 22:18**

The doctrine of original sin is false because:

1. It makes sin a misfortune and a calamity rather than a crime.
2. It makes the sinner deserve pity and compassion rather than blame for his sins.
3. It excuses the sinner.
4. It makes God responsible for sin.
5. It dishonors God. It makes him arbitrary, cruel, and unjust.
6. It causes ministers to wink at and excuse sin.
7. It begets complacency and a low standard of religion among Christians.
8. It is a stumbling-block to the unsaved.
9. It makes Jesus a sinner or it must deny his humanity.
10. It contradicts the Bible.
11. It "adds to" and "takes from" the Bible. God warns against this in Deut. 4:2 and Rev. 22:18, 19.
12. It begets false doctrines and false interpretations of the Scriptures.
13. It is ridiculous, absurd, and unreasonable. It contradicts the

necessary and irresistible affirmations of every man's consciousness and reason, which is something that no true doctrine of the Word of God could do.

Now let us look more fully at each of these points.

1. It makes sin a misfortune and a calamity rather than a crime.

In fact, if the doctrine of original sin were true, sin would be a calamity rather than a crime. Could a sinful nature be the crime of him upon whom it is entailed without his knowledge or consent? If this doctrine were true, the sinner would be the most unfortunate creature in the universe. To blame him or call him criminal for his sins would be absurd, and to punish him for his sins would be a cruel injustice. He would not deserve punishment for his sins, but would rather deserve pity and compassion for the misfortune he had suffered by being born into this world with a sinful nature. And, of course, under these circumstances the Bible would have to be rewritten. For it never speaks of the sinner as unfortunate. It speaks of the sinner's guilt and ill-desert. In the Bible, sin is represented as a crime that deserves the everlasting punishment of hell.

2. It excuses the sinner.

The sinner knows he cannot be to blame for his sins if he is born a sinner and sins unavoidably because of the nature with which he is born. The sinner is compelled to excuse himself (secretly at least) if he really believes that he sins because of an inborn sin nature. It is not a matter of whether he chooses to excuse himself or not; he cannot help but excuse himself. If he really believes that he is born a sinner and that he cannot help but sin because of inborn sin, he must and he will excuse himself, even if only secretly.

Over against the fact that this doctrine gives the sinner an excuse for his sins, we have the biblical fact that God does not excuse sin. Sin in the Bible is always denounced in the strongest language possible and under the most terrible of penalties. The letter and the spirit of the whole Bible is against any doctrine that would permit men to excuse themselves in their sins.

3. It makes God responsible for sin.

If men are born with a sinful nature, who is to blame? Surely not the

sinner, for he had no choice in being born with a sinful nature. The sinner is no more to blame for being born with his nature than he is for being born with blue eyes. But, who is the author of our nature? Who is our Creator? Who formed us in our mother's womb? Who gave us life and breath and all things? To talk of men being born with a sinful nature is to ascribe sin to God because God is the Author of our nature.

4. It dishonors God and makes his government tyrannical, cruel, and unjust. According to this doctrine, innocent little babies are born with a sinful nature, and because of their nature, are objects of God's wrath. Could anything make God more cruel and unreasonable?

This doctrine is infinitely dishonorable to God. Men know it would be cruel and unjust to condemn them for the nature with which they are born. They know that they cannot justly be worthy of the wrath of God for being born with a nature which they did not choose and which they could not avoid. They know that God would be a tyrant and his government tyranny if this grotesque doctrine were true.

5. It is a stumbling-block to the unsaved.

The sinner could not help but stumble over a doctrine that represents God as being cruel and unjust. According to this doctrine, God created us under such physical laws as would cause us all to be born sinners, and then condemns us for being born sinners! The sinner who really believes this doctrine is compelled to regard God as infinitely cruel and unjust. It is not a matter of whether he chooses to regard God as unjust. His irresistible convictions of justice, given to him in his nature by God, will compel him to regard God as unjust. He may not voice his convictions, but he will still hold them secretly nonetheless.

And as long as he feels that God's government is unjust and that he is not to blame for his sins, he cannot really repent. Repentance implies that the sinner blame himself for his sins. It implies that he admit that God and his government are righteous and that he has been all wrong. It implies that, in this spirit, the sinner turn from his sins and submit himself to God's government. But all of this is impossible while the sinner believes a doctrine that causes him to excuse his sins and to regard God's government as cruel and unjust.

6. It begets complacency and a low standard of religion among

Christians.

Christ has two great causes in this world today: the salvation of the lost and the perfection of his church. Every influence of this doctrine is to hinder these two great causes of Christ. If the sinner believes that God's government is unjust and that he is not really to blame for his sins, then he will not and cannot genuinely repent. And if the Christian believes that his very nature is sinful and that it is impossible for him to live without sinning, then he will not aim for Christian perfection, nor will he feel greatly disturbed about sin and worldliness in his life. Every tendency of this doctrine begets an indulgent spirit toward sin and a low standard of religion among Christians.

7. It soothes the conscience of sinning Christians, causing them to stumble into hell. Christians sometimes make the excuse that they cannot help but sin because of a sinful nature inherited from Adam. One brother told me that, before his conversion, he actually prayed to God for clemency and excused his sins by telling God that his sins were the result of his Adamic sin nature. This false doctrine soothes the conscience of unnumbered sinners in the churches and will ultimately stumble them into a sinner's hell.

8. It causes ministers to wink at and excuse sin in their churches. Ministers who believe this doctrine will have a tendency to wink at and excuse sin in their churches. The whole tendency of this doctrine is to beget an indulgent spirit toward sin, and the low, unscriptural standard of religion that actually exists in many churches today.

Where this doctrine is taught and believed there will be little real horror of sinning against God. Christians and ministers will excuse sin with such statements as: "Nobody's perfect," "Even the Apostle Paul had to struggle with 'indwelling sin,'" "God will change us when we get to heaven," "Christians are not perfect, just forgiven," "Be patient, God is still working on me," "I made a mistake," and "God understands our weaknesses and human frailties."

Ministers who really believe this doctrine and have worldly members in their churches will not be inclined to blame them for their worldliness. And, thus, the worldly will be allowed to settle down in their worldliness without feeling any really great danger. After all, God knows and understands that they have the "old Adamic sin nature" dwelling in them

and will have until they die and go to heaven. God will not judge them for their human weaknesses, frailties, and faults. So multitudes of people in the churches deceive themselves, and go on in the broad way of worldliness, selfishness, and sin which will finally lead them down into hell.

9. It contradicts all the great doctrines of the Bible.

This doctrine is so out of character with the Bible that it contradicts all its fundamental teachings. This is something that no true doctrine of the Bible could do, but is exactly what would be expected of a false doctrine. We have already seen that it permits the sinner to excuse himself in his sins. But the letter and the spirit of the whole Bible is against any doctrine that would permit men to excuse themselves in their sins. We have seen that it makes sin a misfortune and a calamity rather than a crime. But the Bible speaks of sin as an act that deserves the everlasting punishment of hell. Also, we have seen that it makes the sinner deserve pity and compassion rather than blame for his sins. But you can search through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will find that God never pities but always blames the sinner for his sins.

The fact is that the doctrine of original sin is so contrary to the Bible that to try to make the two harmonize would be like trying to make light and darkness exist together in one and the same place. Only by completely rewriting the Bible could it be made to agree with the doctrine of original sin.

For instance, the most fundamental doctrines of the Bible are contradicted by the doctrine of original sin:

a. The doctrines of mercy, grace, guilt, pardon, and repentance.

Can a man really be guilty for possessing the nature with which he is born? Can God show him mercy, and pardon his guilt if it is true that he has suffered the misfortune of being born into this world a sinner? What kind of grace would it be that would save a man from the misfortune of being born into this world a sinner? It would not be grace that would save him; it would be justice. And how could a man sincerely repent and condemn himself for his sins if he believed that he was born a sinner and could not avoid sin because of an inborn sin nature? All the fundamental doctrines of the Bible are emptied of their meaning and become

contradictory and confusing if the doctrine of original sin is accepted.

b. The doctrine of God's justice and righteousness in his judgment of sinners.

The Bible says that God will "judge the world in righteousness." Psalm 9:8. But could God judge the world and be righteous if this doctrine were true? What of the heathen who are lost without ever hearing the Gospel? If this doctrine is true, the heathen are born sinners and will of necessity live in sin because of an inherited sin nature, and when they die without ever hearing the Gospel and having a chance to be saved, they are doomed to the everlasting punishment of hell. Now if it is true that they are born sinners and cannot help but sin, can God justly send them to hell? Our God-given convictions of justice war against such an idea.

Those who believe in the doctrine of original sin cannot escape the conviction that justice requires that the heathen have a chance to hear the Gospel and be saved. They cannot escape the convictions that it is unjust that the heathen be lost without at least having the opportunity to accept or reject the Gospel. They feel that the heathen are owed the opportunity to hear the Gospel so they might have a chance to be saved.

But where did this idea come from that the heathen are owed the chance to be saved? I answer: It springs up irresistibly from the belief that men are not the authors of their own sin. It springs up from the belief that men are born with a sinful nature and cannot help but sin. So since they are born with a sinful nature and cannot help but sin, they cannot deserve hell without at least a chance to hear the Gospel and be saved. But the idea that any one is owed the chance to be saved is completely foreign to the Bible. God does not owe anyone the chance to be saved. He does not save anyone to satisfy justice. Jesus did not die for wicked men because he owed them a chance to be saved, but because of his love, mercy, and grace.

But those who believe in the doctrine of original sin find themselves with compelling convictions that contradict the fundamental Bible doctrine of God's righteousness in judging the heathen. The doctrine of original sin compels them to believe that it is not just for the heathen to be judged without a chance to be saved. And, in fact, if the doctrine of original sin were true, it would not be just to condemn the heathen without a chance to hear the Gospel and be saved. Moreover, if the doctrine of original sin

were true, salvation would be on the grounds of justice rather than grace. The justice of God would require that God not only make sure that all mankind have a chance to hear the Gospel, but it would also require that God provide grace (or justice) of such a magnitude that all men would certainly and irresistibly be saved.

Finney makes the following remarks upon the unscriptural tendencies of a belief in the doctrine of original sin:

I object to the doctrine of constitutional sinfulness, that it makes all sin, original and actual, a mere calamity, and not a crime. For those who hold that sin is an essential and inseparable part of our nature, to call it crime, is to talk nonsense. What! a sinful nature the crime of him upon whom it is entailed, without his knowledge or consent? If the nature is sinful, in such a sense that action must necessarily be sinful, which is the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, then sin in action must be a calamity, and can be no crime...since the will has nothing to do with it.

Of course it must render repentance, either with or without the grace of God, impossible, unless grace sets aside our reason. If repentance implies self-condemnation, we can never repent in the exercise of our reason. Constituted as we are, it is impossible that we should condemn ourselves for a sinful nature, or for actions that are unavoidable. The doctrine of original sin, or of a sinful constitution, and of necessary sinful actions, represents the whole moral government of God, the plan of salvation by Christ, and indeed every doctrine of the Gospel, as a mere farce. Upon this supposition the law is tyranny, and the Gospel an insult to the unfortunate.

It is difficult, and, indeed, impossible for those who really believe this doctrine to urge immediate repentance and submission on the sinner, feeling that he is infinitely to blame unless he instantly comply. It is a contradiction to affirm, that a man can heartily believe in the doctrine in question, and yet truly and heartily blame sinners for not doing what is naturally impossible to them. The secret conviction must be in the mind of such a one, that the sinner is not really to blame for being a sinner, any more than he is to blame for being a human being. This the advocate of this doctrine must know. It is vain for him to set up the pretense that he truly blames sinners for their nature, or for their conduct that was unavoidable. He can no more do it, than he can honestly deny the

necessary affirmations of his own reason. Therefore the advocates of this theory must merely hold it as a theory, without believing it, or otherwise they must in their secret convictions excuse the sinner.

This doctrine naturally and necessarily leads its advocates, secretly at least, to ascribe the atonement of Christ rather to justice than to grace to regard it rather as an expediency to relieve the unfortunate, than to render the forgiveness of the inexcusable sinner possible. The advocates of the theory cannot but regard the case of the sinner as rather a hard one, and God as under an obligation to provide a way for him to escape a sinful nature, entailed upon him in spite of himself, and from actual transgression which result from his nature by a law of necessity. If all this is true, the sinner's case is infinitely hard, and God would appear the most unreasonable and cruel of beings, if he did not provide for their escape. These convictions will, and must, lodge in the mind of him who really believes the dogma of a sinful nature. This, in substance, is sometimes affirmed by the defenders of the doctrine of original sin.

The fact that Christ died in the stead and behalf of sinners, proves that God regarded them not as unfortunates, but as criminal and altogether without excuse. Surely Christ need not have died to atone for the misfortunes of man. His death was to atone for their guilt, and not for their misfortunes. But if they are without excuse for sin, they must be without a sinful nature that renders sin unavoidable. If men are without excuse for sin, as the whole law and the Gospel assume and teach, it cannot possibly be that their nature is sinful, for a sinful nature would be the best of all excuses for sin.

This doctrine is a stumbling-block to the church and the world, infinitely dishonorable to God, and an abomination alike to God and the human intellect, and should be banished from every pulpit, and from every formula of doctrine, and from the world. It is a relic of heathen philosophy, and was foisted in among the doctrines of Christianity by Augustine, as every one may know who will take the trouble to examine for himself.

10. It makes Jesus a sinner

The doctrine of original sin makes Jesus a sinner. The advocates of the doctrine of original sin quote Job 14:4 and 15:14 to teach that men are born sinners:

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Job 14:4

What is man, that he should be clean? and he that is born of woman, that he should be righteous? Job 15:14

The first of these texts supposedly teaches that a sinner will always produce another sinner. The second is supposed to teach substantially the same thing, that is, that all those who are born of woman are born sinners. But if the doctrine of original sin is true, then Mary, the mother of our Lord, was also born a sinner; and if a sinner always produces another sinner, and if all those who are born of woman are born sinners, then there is no way to escape the conclusion that Jesus also was born a sinner. So in misusing these and other texts to teach that men are born sinners, the advocates of original sin are also making Jesus a sinner because he partook of the same human nature as other men.

Jesus was a man. He was born of a woman. He was the seed of Abraham, the offspring of David, descended from Adam. Matt. 1:1, Rom. 1:3, Heb. 2:16, Rev. 22:16. The humanity of Christ is fully and unequivocably taught in the Bible, and to teach the doctrine that men are born sinners is to teach the blasphemy that "the man Christ Jesus" was born a sinner.

The Bible says, "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham." Heb. 2:16. "In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." Heb. 2:17. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Heb. 2:14. "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. 2:11. "For we have not an high priest which can not be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we, yet without sin." Heb. 4:15.

The Bible teaches that Christ was, in all respects, a real man, possessing both a human body and a human soul, and with all the attributes of a man. He was born of a woman. He was nourished and cared for by his mother, as other men are. He was circumcised according to the law of Moses. He was once an infant in knowledge, for he grew both in Wisdom and in stature. He hungered, he thirsted, he ate, he drank, he labored, he slept, he grew tired, and he lived and died like other men. He was

recognized as a man and a Jew by other men. "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be make like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." "For we have not an high priest which can not be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. 2:17, 4:15, 2:11.

It is a serious error to deny the deity of Christ. One cannot be a Christian and deny his deity. John taught that it is equally serious to deny the humanity of Christ. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." I John 4:2, 3. "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. II John 7.

The doctrine of Christ's human nature is fully attested in the Bible. Nevertheless, because of their belief that men are born sinners and that human nature or the flesh is inherently sinful, the defenders of the doctrine of original sin must deny in some way or another the real humanity of Christ and that he came in human flesh like other men. Phil. 2:6-8, I Tim. 3:16, Gal. 4:4, John 1:14, I John 4:2-3, II John 7.

Augustine did this by teaching that sin is transmitted through the lust of procreation so that since Jesus was born of a virgin, he was not born through lust and therefore was not born with the same sinful nature as other men. Harnack says:

The extremely disgusting disquisitions on marriage and lust in the polemical writings against Julian are, as the latter rightly perceived, hardly independent of Augustine's Manichaeism...And the disquisitions are by no means a mere outwork in Augustine's system; they belong to its very center...Children possess original sin, because their parents have procreated them in lust and by this proposition stands or falls the doctrine of original sin. So also Christ has sinlessness attributed to him because he has not been born of marriage, and Augustine imagined paradisaical marriages in which children were begotten without lust, or, as Julian says jestingly, were to be shaken from trees.

This idea of Augustine that lust in procreation transmits sin contradicts

the whole spirit of the Scriptures on marriage and the bearing of children. Moreover, the Bible nowhere teaches that the virgin birth of Jesus was to keep him from being born with original sin. The Bible teaches that there was one, and only one, reason for the virgin birth of our Lord. It was so that God could take on human nature, become a man, and dwell among us. Luke 1: 31-35, John 1:14, Gal. 4:4, Matt. 1:1. The reason for the virgin birth is made plain in Luke 1:31-35. This passage gives no hint that the reason for the virgin birth was to keep Jesus free from original sin; what it does tell us is that the reason was so that God's Son could be born.

But we have already seen the Scriptures in Hebrews which show that Christ took upon himself our human nature (Heb. 2:14), that he was in all things made like his brethren (Heb. 2:17), that he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one (Heb. 2:11), and that he was tempted like we are in all points (Heb. 4:15), yet without sin. Could it really be true that he was tempted in all points like we are if he did not have the same nature as we? And is it not true that the word "yet" in the statement "yet without sin" would lose all its force and meaning if Christ had not been tempted in the same human nature as we yet without sin?

Every which way it turns, the doctrine of original sin flies in the face of the teachings of the Word of God. It makes Jesus a sinner, or it must deny his true humanity.

11. It begets other false doctrines.

Many false views on sin and salvation, with their concurrent misinterpretations of the Scriptures, come out of this one fundamental error. Consider the following:

a. The doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception."

This is the doctrine that Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ was "conceived free from any of the corruption of original sin," in order that she might be pure enough to be the mother of Christ. Of course, this doctrine is not taught in the Bible. It is an invention of men, made necessary by a belief in the doctrine of original sin.

b. The doctrine of infant baptism for the remission of original sin.

This doctrine is another invention of men, made necessary to relieve

innocent little infants from the guilt of original sin and the wrath of God, which supposedly rest upon them because of being born with a sinful nature.

c. The doctrine of Limbo.

This doctrine is another invention made necessary for infants who die without baptism. Limbo is supposed to be a place where unbaptized infants go instead of hell, "where neither the joys of heaven nor the miseries of hell prevail."

d. The doctrine that men have lost the image of God since the fall of Adam.

This is another unbiblical doctrine made necessary by a belief in the doctrine of original sin. Of course, if men come into this world "dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body," as the Westminster Confession says, they have certainly not been created in the image of God. But the fact that man is created in the image of God is evident from the Scriptures. God told Noah, long after the sin of Adam, that man was "made in the image of God." Gen. 9:16. And, of course, the New Testament Scriptures teach just as clearly that man is created in the image of God. (See I Cor. 11:7, James 3:9, Acts 17:29.) It is amazing how men will ignore the clear teachings of the Holy Scriptures in order to accommodate the doctrine of original sin.

e. The doctrine of a physical, passive regeneration.

Believing, as the advocates of original sin do, that moral depravity is constitutional in nature, they must believe in a physical and passive regeneration, in order to be consistent. Regeneration, according to this school, is a change in the constitutional nature of man. It is a change wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit, in which the sinner is wholly passive, and in which new and holy susceptibilities, dispositions, tastes, and appetites are implanted or created in the soul.

The problem with this is that no such physical or passive regeneration is taught in the Bible. The Bible teaches that the work which the Holy Spirit does in the sinner is moral rather than physical. It is a work of moral suasion, of divine teaching and illumination, of convicting and reproving of sin. John 6:44-45, John 16:8, James 1:18, John 15:3, I Peter 1:22-23. The Bible teaches that the sinner cannot be passive in regeneration, but

he must respond to the voice of God. He must repent and make to himself "a new heart and a new spirit." Ez. 18:30-32.

The Bible teaches that regeneration is the work of both God and man: (1) The work of God: Titus 3:5, James 1:18, I John 3:9, John 3:5, John 6:44-45; (2) The work of the sinner himself: Ez. 18:31, I Peter 1:22, James 4:7-8, Acts 3:19, James 1:21, Jer. 4:14; (3) The work of men who preach the Word of God: I Cor. 4:15, Fil. 1:10, James 5:19-20, Prov. 11:30, Dan. 12:3, Mark 1:17, I Cor. 9:22; and (4) The work of the Word of God: I Cor. 4:15, James 1:18, James 1:21, I Peter 1:23.

There is no passive physical change in the sinner when he becomes a saint. The Bible teaches that regeneration is an active, cooperative, moral change, and not a passive physical change.

f. The doctrine of a natural inability to repent.

If man's very nature is sinful, then it is a natural impossibility for him to repent. This fact has led naturally and necessarily to the doctrine that God first changes the sinner's nature in regeneration (passive regeneration), and then the sinner repents. According to this school of thought, repentance and conversion both follow regeneration because the sinner cannot obey God's command to repent and be converted until after he has been regenerated.

g. The doctrines of arbitrary election and reprobation, absolute and unconditional predestination, irresistible grace, and a necessitated will.

All of the above doctrines follow logically from a belief in constitutional sinfulness. Augustine, the father of the doctrine of original sin, taught that salvation depends on God's inscrutable election and predestination, independent of any human agency. He taught that man is born with a corrupt and depraved nature, that he is not free (except to do evil), that he has a necessitated will, that God's love is infused, and that man is by nature absolutely unable to love God, or do anything good. These teachings of Augustine engendered fatalism and despair in the hearts of some in the Catholic Church:

In 426 or 427, it was reported to Augustine that the monks in the cloister of Adrumetum in North Africa were in some cases driven to despair, in other cases moved to careless self-indulgence, by his teaching as to man's helplessness and as to irresistible grace.

Free will, grace, predestination, election, and reprobation are, of course, biblical doctrines. It is only the extreme and fatalistic views of these doctrines, as taught by Augustine and others who believe in the constitutional sinfulness of man, that are unscriptural.

h. The doctrine of a natural inability to obey God.

The doctrine of a natural inability to obey God is at the very heart of the doctrine of original sin. According to the advocates of original sin, all men, even those who are Christians, have a corrupt, sinful nature and are unable to obey God as long as they are in this life:

From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions. Westminster Confession.

This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated. Westminster Confession.

By reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil. Westminster Confession.

They deplore their inability to love their Redeemer, to keep themselves from sin, to live a holy life in any degree adequate to their own convictions of their obligations...They recognize it as the fruit and evidence of the corruption of their nature derived as a sad inheritance from their first parents. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 273.

No man is able...by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed. Larger Catechism.

...whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually, which is commonly called original sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions. Larger Catechism.

This doctrine opens the floodgates of rebellion against God, for it implies impunity for sin. Surely God would not be so unreasonable as to judge us for sin when he knows that we are by nature unable to obey him. Oh,

what a lie the church has embraced! There is not one verse of Scripture in the entire Bible that says men have a sinful nature which makes them unable to obey God. It is true that all sinners are in a moral sense unable to obey God, but they are not naturally unable to obey God. And there is a great difference between a natural inability and a moral inability to obey God. Let us illustrate the difference between the two: A friend of mine is standing next to his brand new Cadillac. I ask him, "Can you lift your car off the ground?"

"No!" he answers. His answer here refers to a natural inability. It is naturally and physically impossible for him to lift so much weight.

Then I ask, "Can you sell me your new car for a dollar?"

Again, he answers, "No!" His answer this time refers to a moral inability. It does not mean that it is really a natural impossibility for him to sell his car, but that he cannot sell it because he is not willing to sell it.

The Bible never speaks of a sinner's natural inability to obey God. When it speaks of the sinner's inability to obey God, it is always speaking of a moral inability. He cannot obey because he is so selfish that he is unwilling to obey. All men can obey if they will. The following are just a few of the many verses from the Bible that teach that the Christian has been freed from his sins by the grace of Christ, and that he now has the power to live a victorious sin-free life:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Rom. 6:6

Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Rom. 6:14

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. Rom. 6:17, 18

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Rom. 6:22

Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8:34, 36

Now, who shall we believe? Shall we reject God's Word in order to hold on to a man-made doctrine? Shall we go to God in prayer and say: "Lord, thou hast promised that sin shall not have dominion over me thou hast promised that he whom the Son sets free is free indeed and Lord, thou hast given many other promises, assuring me of thy grace and power to keep me from sin but Lord, I don't believe thy promises; Lord, I don't think thou art able to keep me from sin in this life because I have been taught by men that I still have the remaining corruptions of original sin in me and will not be able to obey thee perfectly until I die and go to heaven."

Now, although you may not voice these very words in prayer, this is the unbelieving spirit that rules your life if you excuse sin by claiming a natural inability to obey God. But again, the doctrine of inability contradicts the very heart of the Gospel the good news that Jesus died to liberate us from our sins:

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. Gal. 1:4

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Titus 2:14

God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. Acts 3:26

Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Eph. 5:25-27

If the doctrine of inability is true, the atonement of Christ was a failure, because he died to "redeem us from all iniquity," to "deliver us from this present evil world," to "turn us from our iniquities," and to make us "holy, and without spot, wrinkle, or blemish."

The doctrine of inability demeans the grace and the power of God. What a low opinion preachers have of the grace and power of God when they say that God cannot enable his people to live without sin. God tells us that "sin shall not have dominion over us because we are under his grace," he tells us that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," and he tells us that we are "kept by the power of God, through faith." But the doctrine of inability tells us that, with all of God's abounding

grace, we are still unable to obey him and live without sin. Listen as the advocates of original sin cast aspersions upon the power of God's grace to free from sin: "No man is able...by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed." Larger Catechism.

The doctrine of inability makes God a liar. He solemnly promises to keep us from being tempted above our ability to obey. He promises to liberate us from all sin, and to preserve us in righteousness and holiness, but according to the doctrine of inability, his promises are all empty. If the doctrine of inability is true, then God is insincere and deceitful because he commands us to do what he knows we cannot do. Surely if the doctrine of inability is true, God knows about it. Yet in the face of all this, he commands: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" and "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Matt. 5:48, I Peter 1:15. Now if God gives us these commandments, knowing that it is impossible for us to obey them, then he is insincere and deceitful.

The fact is that the doctrine of inability turns the whole Bible upside-down. It mocks both the promises and the commandments of God. It blackens God's character, demeans his grace, and excuses the sinner in his sins. It is not just a harmless myth and religious superstition; it is infinitely worse. It is a devilish doctrine that muffles the voice of conscience, corrupts Christian practice, and stumbles Christians into hell. It teaches that the Christian must never expect to be saved from sin in this life, and that he should expect to live more or less in rebellion against his Savior until he dies and goes to heaven. What a lie from the devil! Where can this teaching be found in the Bible? Instead of teaching that the Christian cannot be freed from sin and made holy until he gets to heaven, the Bible warns that the unholy will never get to heaven!

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Heb. 12:14

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Matt. 5:8

Judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? I Peter 4:17, 18

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life. Rev. 3:4, 5

The myth that God will transform the character of the sinning Christian when he gets to heaven, and once there, make him a holy Christian, is just that a myth. The decree of God is:

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. Rev. 22:11

God will not change the character of anyone after he dies. He is changing the character of sinners now, in this life, while we are yet in this present world. There will be a change in the Christian when he gets to heaven, but not in his character. His body will be changed. The Bible says, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." I Cor. 15:53. This is not talking about a change of character; it is talking about an incorruptible body that will never die. But, oh, how many are deceiving themselves by the false doctrine that suddenly, when they get to heaven, they will be transformed into holy Christians. Hear again the words of the Revelator:

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be...Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates of the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. Rev. 22:11, 12, 14, 15

The doctrine of a natural inability to obey God is a devilish doctrine that is stumbling multitudes of professing Christians into hell.

12. The doctrine of original sin adds to and takes from the Bible.

God says, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Deut. 4:2. But the whole original sin dogma is an addition to the Bible.

For instance, the doctrine of original sin teaches that the whole human race existed in Adam and sinned with him when he transgressed, that we had one common will with Adam, that his will was the will of the race, and that when Adam revolted, the will of the race revolted with him. But you can search your Bible through from beginning to end, and you will never find this taught in it. It is not taught there. It is man's doctrine added to the Bible.

Again, the doctrine of original sin teaches that Adam was our federal head or moral representative, and that God made a covenant with him, agreeing to give eternal life to him and all his descendants if he obeyed, and threatening condemnation upon him and all his descendants if he disobeyed. But is any of this teaching in the Bible? No, the Bible is silent about this imagined covenant made with Adam.

Again, men teach that God created us under such physical laws as would cause us all to be born sinners. They teach that we are born with a corrupt sinful nature which is the fountain and cause of all our actual sins, that we sin unavoidably because of that nature, and that even the Christian sins necessarily because of the "remaining corruptions" of his inborn sin nature. Can these unholy and grotesque teachings be found in the Bible? No. They are all additions to the Bible.

Does the Bible speak of the "Immaculate Conception"? Does it speak of infant baptism for the remission of original sin? Does it speak of "Limbo"? Does it talk about an "inborn sin nature" or an Adamic sin nature"? Does it mention "original sin" or "actual sin," making a distinction between the two? No. None of these doctrines and none of these terms can be found in the Bible. They are all inventions of men and additions to the Bible.

But the doctrine of original sin also takes from the Word of God. It takes away those passages in the Bible that declare that men are guilty and blameworthy for their sins, and makes their sins the unfortunate result of being born with a sinful nature. It takes away all those passages in the Bible that teach that God is loving, good, and just and makes him cruel and unjust, by teaching that God condemned the whole human race for Adam's sin. It takes away those passages in the Bible that teach that men are created upright, with a good nature, and in the image and likeness of God, by teaching that since Adam's sin, men are no longer created in the image of God, but are born defiled in "all the faculties and

parts of soul and body." It takes away those texts in the Bible that teach that Jesus had true human nature like other men, by teaching that Jesus could not have had the same human nature as other men without being a sinner.

It takes away the heart and soul of the Gospel, the biblical truth that God saves his people from their sins, by teaching that the Christian cannot live even for one day without sinning in thought, word, or deed. It contradicts and weakens the spirit of holiness that shines from every page of the Holy Bible, when it teaches that God's work of holiness in the church must wait until the church gets to heaven because of the "remaining corruptions of original sin." It destroys innumerable promises that God has given to the church, promises that the church can overcome sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil. And in doing this, it also limits the power of the Holy One of Israel, making sin infinitely more powerful than the power of his sanctifying grace through his indwelling Holy Spirit.

Every which way it turns, the doctrine of original sin either takes away some glorious truth from the Bible, or it adds some grotesque teaching that contradicts the Bible. It brings confusion to Gospel truth, making the doctrines of mercy, grace, guilt, pardon, and repentance unintelligible. It makes the holy, just, and loving God to be cruel and unjust, and it makes the wicked sinner to be the unfortunate recipient of a nature which he could not avoid. It is a stumbling-block to the church, encouraging many who call themselves Christians to live a life so far below the Bible standard of holiness and true Christianity that they will ultimately fall into a hypocrite's hell.

13. It is ridiculous, absurd, and unreasonable. It contradicts the necessary and irresistible affirmations of every man's consciousness and reason, something that no Biblical doctrine could do.

The necessary affirmations of every man's reason testify that the doctrine of original sin is false. But some Christians object that we should not appeal to reason in determining the truth or falseness of doctrines, and that if we do, we will go off into error. There exists, at least among some Christians, the superstition that man's God-given reason cannot be trusted, that it is subversive of the Word of God, and that if we accepted its necessary and irresistible affirmations, the doctrines of the Bible would be overthrown. But just the opposite is true. Man's reason and

consciousness are in harmony with the Bible and confirm its teachings.

But how is it that some Christians can actually believe that reason will overthrow the doctrines of the Bible? I answer: by believing doctrines that they know are contradicted by reason, and believing that these doctrines are taught in the Bible. Let's explain: All the truths of the Bible are in harmony with man's reason, his moral nature, and his consciousness. The Scriptures never teach anything which our consciousness and rational moral nature declare to be false, unjust, or impossible. The fundamental truths of Christianity cannot be in manifest contradiction to reason. Yet the doctrine of original sin does contradict reason, reality, and man's irresistible convictions of justice. But Christians have been taught to believe it is a biblical doctrine. At the same time, they are conscious that it contradicts their reason and their convictions of justice. The result is that they think reason is to be distrusted and rejected as an evil that would overthrow the doctrines of the Bible if relied on!

But I repeat what I said in a former chapter: Would those who believe in the doctrine of original sin reject reason if the doctrine of original sin were reasonable? What is the reason that they reject reason when discussing original sin? It is because reason rejects the original sin dogma. If our reason told us that it would be just and righteous for a whole race to be condemned for the sin of one man, they would not object to reason. If our reason told us that the heathen could justly be born sinners, and commit sin necessarily because of an inborn sin nature, and then die in their sins without a knowledge of the Gospel, and go down into hell, they would not object to reason. If reason told us that sin, with its guilt and condemnation, could be passed on in the physical constitution of man, they would not object to reason. If reason told us that a non-moral and non-personal entity called "flesh" could, contrary to its nature, take on personality and moral character, and be sinful, they would not object to reason. No, they object to reason only because they are conscious that the doctrine of original sin is unreasonable.

In effect, the defenders of the doctrine of original sin admit that the doctrine of original sin is unreasonable. For them to say that the testimony of reason should not be admitted is a tacit admission that the necessary affirmations of their own reason testify against the doctrine of original sin.

There are certain self-evident truths, direct perceptions of reason, known to be true to all men. A thing cannot both be and not be. Two contradictory things cannot both be true. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. The whole cannot be greater than the sum of its parts. Every effect must have a cause. A creation implies a creator. Moral character is non-transferable. There are no proxies in morals. Sin cannot be imputed where it does not exist without injustice. Perfect justice cannot punish the innocent for the guilt of another. Sin is personal and non-transferable. Now all of the above truths are known intuitively. They do not need to be proved. They are direct perceptions of reason, and cannot rationally be denied by any man.

But the doctrine of original sin does deny self-evident truths. It denies the self-evident truth that there can be no proxies in morals and teaches that Adam committed sin for us by proxy. It denies that moral character is non-transferable and teaches that Adam's sinful character was transferred to all his descendants! It denies that sin cannot be imputed where it does not exist without injustice and teaches that the infinitely holy and just God imputed the sin of Adam to all his descendants. It denies that perfect justice cannot punish the innocent for the guilt of another and teaches that God, who is perfect in truth and justice, condemned the whole human race for the sin of Adam.

To say that the doctrine of original sin is unreasonable is a profound understatement. There really never has existed a doctrine so unreasonable, so absurd, and so ridiculous as this doctrine. It is not only absurd, it is plain superstition to believe that we sinned in Adam thousands of years before we were born and began our existence. No man can torture his consciousness into affirming that he existed and sinned thousands of years before he was born. To believe that man's flesh can be inherently sinful and that men can be born sinners is gross superstition. The whole dogma of original sin is a monstrous superstition and a fantastic fiction that is fit only for the pages of some wild science fiction novel.

The doctrine of original sin is clearly unreasonable, and can only be a doctrine of the Bible if the doctrines of the Bible can be unreasonable. But it is both a foolish and a dangerous idea to think that the doctrines of the Bible can be unreasonable. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, and as such, it must be reasonable, consistent, and harmonious

throughout. If men propound any theory and try to force it on the church as a doctrine of the Word of God, and that doctrine is absurd, unreasonable, and contradictory with other doctrines of the Bible, then it is foolish and wicked to accept it, while rejecting the arguments of reason which show its error.

The Scriptures never teach anything which our consciousness and moral nature declare to be false, unjust, or impossible. The fundamental truths of Christianity cannot be in manifest contradictions to reason, reality, and justice. And yet the original sin dogma does contradict man's reason, man's knowledge of reality, and man's irresistible convictions of justice.

Chapter 8

THE GREAT PROBLEM OF ORIGINAL SIN

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Gen. 18:25

He shall judge the world with righteousness. Psalm 96:13

He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness. Acts 17:31

The one great problem of original sin is that it clashes with man's irresistible convictions of justice. These innate, God-given convictions affirm to us irresistibly that it is impossible to hold a man responsible for a deed that he did not commit and that was committed thousands of years before he was born and came into existence. So the theologians who defend the theory of original sin have the impossible task of justifying God for doing what their own conscience affirms he could not be just in doing.

The theologians who work so hard to resolve this problem still find it impossible to escape their God-given convictions that the doctrine of original sin does, in fact, involve God in a monstrous injustice. Charles Hodge both recognizes this injustice and evades it in the same sentence:

It may be difficult to reconcile the doctrine of innate evil dispositions with the justice and goodness of God, but that is a difficulty which does not pertain to this subject. A malignant being is an evil being, if endowed with reason, whether he was so made or so born, and a benevolent rational being is good in the universal judgment of men, whether he was so created or so born. We admit that it is repugnant to our moral judgments that God should create an evil being; or that any being should be born in a state of sin, unless his being so born is the consequence of a just judgment.

This, then how to reconcile the justice and goodness of God with the doctrine of original sin is the great, omnipresent problem of original sin, a problem that remains to haunt the advocate of original sin even after he has hurriedly dismissed it. Sheldon also calls attention to the problem of the injustice of God involved in the doctrine of original sin. He says:

The same God whose penetrating glance burns away every artifice with which a man may enwrap himself, and reaches at once to the naked reality, is represented as swathing His judgment with a gigantic artifice, in that He holds countless millions guilty of a trespass which He knows was committed before their personal existence, and which they could no more prevent than they could hinder the fiat of creation. If this is justice, then justice is a word of unknown meaning.

Strong admits quite frankly that he is not completely satisfied with the theories of original sin. He says:

We must grant that no one, even of these later theories, is wholly satisfactory. We hope, however, to show that the last of them the Augustinian theory, the theory of Adam's natural headship, the theory that Adam and his descendants are naturally and organically one explains the largest number of facts, is least open to objections, and is most accordant with Scripture.

The fact is that the irresistible convictions of justice in the hearts of all men reject the teachings of the doctrine of original sin. Consider the following:

1. If Eph. 2:3, "By nature the children of wrath," means born with a sinful nature and under the wrath of God because of that nature which the advocates of the doctrine of original sin teach then it follows that every child who dies in infancy goes to hell where he must forever suffer the awful punishment and wrath of God.

But Christians will not accept this. I have not found a Christian yet who will accept that babies who die go to hell. But this text, which they themselves use to prove original sin, could not help but teach that babies who die go to hell where they will suffer God's wrath in never-ending punishment. If babies really are born "by nature the children of wrath," then they must go to hell if they die in such a state. But why is it that Christians cannot accept that babies who die go to hell? Because they know it would be a monstrous and cruel injustice to send innocent little babies to hell. And, of course, they are right. God would never send innocent little babies to hell. However, this is what Eph. 2:3 necessarily teaches if it teaches the doctrine of original sin. This problem with Eph. 2:3 points up once again the insurmountable problem with original sin, which is that it conflicts with our God-given convictions of justice, making

God unjust.

2. If Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," means that even unborn children in their mother's womb are sinners, then it follows that all the multiplied millions of children who have been aborted, along with all stillbirths, are in hell where they will suffer its torments throughout all eternity for "their part" in the sin of Adam.

3. If Heb. 7:9-10, "Levi...paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him" means that in Adam all mankind sinned because they were in his loins when he transgressed, which is the teaching of the advocates of original sin, then it follows that the Lord Jesus Christ also sinned in Adam. This is a blasphemous thought, which no Christian can allow, but something that would have to be true if all of human nature was corrupted in Adam when he sinned.

But if this theory is true, then we might suppose that there will be myriads of souls who will never be born, but who nevertheless existed as seed in the loins of Adam, and who will go to hell because they sinned in Adam, even though they never will be born! Why not! Is this so astonishing? If the advocates of original sin can believe that all of humanity sinned in Adam before they were born and began their existence, why can they not see that all the souls who never will be born and never will exist also sinned in him, because they were seed in his loins and potential souls when he sinned? There is no greater problem with the latter than with the former! And if the later is impossible and absurd, so is the former!

4. Another problem is man's idea of an "age of accountability." This idea is completely inconsistent with the idea of original sin. Yet I have never known a Christian who believed in original sin who did not also believe in an "age of accountability." But the two cannot exist together because the doctrine of original sin forbids that children wait until they reach a certain age before they become accountable. According to original sin, we are accountable and guilty for Adam's sin at birth! This leaves no room for a child to come to the "age of accountability" because he is already accountable, guilty, and under the wrath of God from birth. In other words, he has reached the "age of accountability" when he is only an innocent little baby.

The idea of an "age of accountability" is completely inconsistent with the

doctrine of original sin. Those who have the idea of the one must give up the idea of the other. The two cannot consist together.

But Christians will not give up the idea of an "age of accountability." Why? Because of their irresistible convictions of justice. The conviction that a child cannot be accountable for his actions until he knows the difference between right and wrong is the universal judgment of all men, and this judgment repudiates the doctrine of original sin, which teaches that babies are accountable, guilty, and under the wrath of God from birth.

5. The idea of free moral agency is also inconsistent with the doctrine of original sin. Men cannot sin unavoidably because of an inborn sin nature and be free at the same time. If we are born with a sinful nature which makes sin unavoidable, then we are not free. Nor are we moral agents because moral agency implies freedom. Yet I have never known a Christian who believed in original sin who did not believe also that he was a free moral agent. But to be consistent, those who believe in the doctrine of original sin must give up the idea that they are free moral agents, for if we sin unavoidably because of an inborn sin nature, we cannot be free. But Christians will not give up the idea that they are free moral agents. Why? Because of their irresistible convictions that they must be free, meaning able to obey God and do right, or they cannot justly be held accountable for their actions.

6. The doctrine of original sin so clashes with man's irresistible convictions of justice that, even when men believe and teach the doctrine, they cannot escape the fact that it is unjust.

I remember that, soon after I was converted, I began testifying and preaching in missions, jails, and on street corners. I preached that men are born sinners because that is what I had heard others preach, and I remember that at the time I felt uneasy telling people that they were sinners because they were born sinners. Why? It was because I knew intuitively that we could not be to blame for being born sinners. I was preaching that men were born sinners, even though it conflicted with my irresistible convictions of justice.

Also, recently I heard an old preacher preaching on original sin. He preached the standard sermon, using the standard proof-texts. Then he concluded his sermon almost facetiously with the words, "When I get to

heaven, I'm going to ask God all about this." In this way, he tacitly acknowledged his consciousness of the obvious injustice of the original sin doctrine. The very advocates of this doctrine cannot escape their God-given convictions that it is unjust.

7. It is a remarkable fact that there are several conflicting theories of original sin instead of just one. Why is this? The reason is founded in the great problem of original sin: Man's reason testifies that it is unjust. And so, several different theories have been formulated, and have come down to us, each one proposing to have the best legal basis upon which God might be just in condemning the whole human race for the sin of one man. This brings us to the discussion of a theory we have not mentioned up until now, the Arminian Theory of original sin. This theory was formulated by Arminius in the early part of the 17th century and was a reaction to the injustice perceived in the Augustinian theory of original sin. Arminius taught that babies are not guilty for the sin of Adam. They inherit a depraved nature from Adam, but God bestows upon each individual at the dawn of consciousness a special influence of the Holy Spirit sufficient to counteract the effect of their inherited depravity and make obedience possible. So that men are able to obey God if they will cooperate with the special influence of the Holy Spirit. Under his theory, men are guilty only when they consciously and voluntarily commit sin.

Like Arminius did, preachers, Sunday school teachers, and Christians in general make up their own brand of original sin because of compelling convictions of its injustice. For instance, Augustine taught that infants who die without baptism are damned, but this teaching is too offensive to the conscience of most Christians. So they teach a different brand of original sin or remain silent upon this point that is so repulsive to the conscience. They use all the standard proof-texts, such as Eph. 2:3, "By nature the children of wrath," to prove the doctrine of original sin, but are either unaware of the implications this has for infants who die or come up with a brand of original sin in which babies are not accountable and guilty for original sin until they reach the "age of accountability." They invent a new brand of original sin because their convictions of justice tell them that children cannot be guilty before they actually sin. They are ignorant that the doctrine of original sin makes children "by nature the children of wrath" from the time they are born. They are unaware of the implications and inconsistencies of what they believe and teach. They are teaching

what they have been taught, and since they can quote some proof-texts from the Bible, they feel they are on firm ground. They are unaware of the fact that their irresistible convictions of the unjustice of the original sin doctrine has compelled them to come up with a brand new kind of original sin that could only be true if the dogma of original sin were false!

God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. II Peter 3:9

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. I Tim. 2:4

Chapter 9

ORIGINAL SIN MAKES GOD INCONSISTENT AND IMPERFECT

In Chapter 7 we saw thirteen reasons why the doctrine of original sin is false. In Chapter 8 we saw that the doctrine of original sin clashes with man's irresistible convictions of justice. In this chapter we will see that if the doctrine of original sin were true, it would destroy the very idea of a perfect and eternally unchanging God. It would make God inconsistent with himself.

First, let's state three irrefutable facts about God:

1. God desires the salvation of all of humanity.
2. But he, in fact, has chosen to save only a part of humanity.
3. God is consistent.

The variable that explains the difference between the all that God desires to save and the some he decides to save must lie outside of God or he would be inconsistent and could not be God. This fact is as certain as the three irrefutable facts stated above are certain. God, who is consistent, cannot desire the salvation of all of humanity and allow any to be lost unless the reason for this lies outside of his choice and his control. If the choice lies with God alone, he most certainly will save all because he desires the salvation of all. However, the fact is God does not save all because he cannot save all, or even some, unless they of their own free will submit to the conditions he has laid down in his Word.

Therefore, the doctrine of original sin with its teaching that man is unable to repent of sin and believe the Gospel because of natural depravity is false. For it would make God the only variable in the salvation of man and therefore, make him inconsistent with himself desiring to save all, while at the same time desiring not to save all; regenerating and enabling some to believe and repent, while at the same time, contrary to his will, leaving others in their state of depravity and inability to be lost. If the doctrine of original sin were true, the salvation of all men would depend solely upon the arbitrary choice of God, and God would be imperfect and inconsistent, desiring the salvation of all mankind but arbitrarily choosing to damn myriads of the souls he did not will should perish.

The variable is and must be in man. And if the variable is in man, then man must be able to respond to God, which means that men cannot be born with a nature that makes it impossible for them to repent and believe the Gospel. Any interpretation of the Bible which puts the variable in God alone is false. For if God were the only variable in man's salvation, then God, who desires the salvation of all men, would certainly save all men!

The fact that God desires to save all but saves only some demonstrates that the variable for the salvation of men resides in the free choice of man and not in some arbitrary election of God. Man, therefore, is not born with a natural inability to obey God. He is not and cannot be born a sinner. We see, then, that the doctrine of original sin and all its sister doctrines the doctrine of natural inability to obey God, the doctrine of the need of a physical regeneration by God before sinners can believe and repent, and the doctrine of an arbitrary election and reprobation by God are all proven to be false doctrines by the fact that God desires the salvation of all, but only saves some.

Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. I John 4:2, 3

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. II John 7

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. John 1:14

Chapter 10

JESUS WAS A MAN

If the doctrine of original sin is true, one of two things must be true: either Jesus was born a sinner, or he was not a man. Now, the Bible is clear on both points. Jesus was a man, and he was without sin. We know, therefore, that the doctrine of original sin cannot be true. It is a myth and a lie.

John denounced those who denied that Jesus came in the flesh as deceivers and antichrists. What does it mean to deny that Jesus Christ came in the flesh? It means to deny that Jesus was a man, with a flesh and blood body like other men. Are there any people today who deny that Christ has come in the flesh? Yes, all those who believe in the doctrine of the sinfulness of human flesh must either believe that Christ, who came in human flesh, was born a sinner or they must deny that he came in the flesh.

It is a serious error to deny the deity of Christ. One cannot be a Christian and deny his deity. John taught that it is equally serious to deny the humanity of Christ:

Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come. I John 4:3

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. II John 7

John wrote his epistles, condemning those "who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" because of the teaching of the Gnostics. The Gnostics had a syncretic religion that combined Christianity with eastern religion, pagan philosophies, and the doctrines of mysticism and gnosis. They denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh because of their philosophical belief that matter is evil. So according to their belief, if Jesus had come with a real human body, he would have been sinful. They denied the real incarnation of Christ, his bodily sufferings on the cross, and his bodily resurrection because of their view that man's

material body and all material things are polluted and sinful. They denied that he came in the flesh to save him from sin. His fleshly manifestations were not real but only apparent.

It was from the teachings of gnosticism, with its pagan philosophical belief that all material things are essentially evil, that the doctrine of original sin was born. Augustine, the father of the doctrine of original sin, was for many years a disciple of the Manichaeans, which was a Gnostic sect. His doctrine of physical moral depravity and of inherited physical sinfulness had its roots in the teachings of gnosticism.

Why is all of this important? Because the Bible teaches that Jesus was a man and that he came in the flesh. However, the doctrine of original sin teaches that man, his flesh, and his bodily nature are corrupted and sinful because of Adam's transgression. It is impossible to believe the doctrine of man's inherited bodily sinfulness without either believing that Jesus was born a sinner or that he was not a man. For if the doctrine of original sin is true, either Jesus was born a sinner or he was not a man! Jesus was a man. He did come in the flesh, and he was without sin. Therefore the doctrine of original sin cannot be true. It is a myth and a lie.

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. II John 7-11

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and

the spirit of error. I John 4:2-6

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. John 1:14

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. I John 3:6

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. I John 3:9

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. I John 5:4

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. I John 5:18

Chapter 11

CAN CHRISTIANS LIVE WITHOUT SIN?

It is hard to understand how a thinking person can read the Bible and still believe in original sin. The Bible commands men to depart from all sin, to keep God's commandments, to be holy because God is holy, and to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. The Bible teaches that all men ought to live without sin and that they can live without sin by God's grace and the power of his indwelling Holy Spirit. The Bible also teaches that Christians do live without sin and overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But the doctrine of original sin contradicts the Bible and teaches that no man, not even the Christian, can live without committing sin:

From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions. Westminster Confession.

This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated. Westminster Confession.

They deplore their inability to love their Redeemer, to keep themselves from sin, to live a holy life in any degree adequate to their own convictions of their obligations...They recognize it as the fruit and evidence of the corruption of their nature derived as a sad inheritance from their first parents. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 273

...whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually, which is commonly called original sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions. Larger Catechism.

No man is able...by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed. Larger Catechism

Anyone who has read much of God's Word knows that the above

declarations are altogether foreign to the Bible. The Bible teaches that the believer can live without sin. Its pages are filled with promises to the believer that he can live a holy life and have victory over sin, temptation, the world, the flesh, and the devil:

Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Matt. 1:21

Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8:34, 36

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. I John 5:4

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. I John 3:6.

And we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. I John 5:18

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. I John 3:9

Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Rom. 6:14

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. Jude 24, 25

Now, who are we going to believe? Will we accept the uncertain declarations of mere men or will we accept the sure Word of God? If, after all that God has said and promised in his Holy Book, it is still impossible to live without sin, then God is a liar, deceitful, and insincere. Surely, if it is impossible to live without sin, God knows it! Yet he promises victory over sin. He commands holiness and Christian perfection. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." I Peter 1:15. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as you father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5:48. Would God command us to walk in Christian holiness and Christian perfection if he knew it was impossible for us? I cannot believe it! Do those who propagate the evil doctrine of original sin know its implications on the character of God? If

God knows that we can't obey him, if he knows that we are born with a corrupt sinful nature which makes obedience impossible, then he is insincere and deceitful in commanding us to do what he knows is impossible. And if God knows that we are born with a sinful nature that makes sin necessary, then all his promises of grace and power to keep us from sin are lies.

God cannot lie. It is the doctrine of original sin which is a lie! For the Word of God reveals that God has always had his saints. He has always had a people that feared him, loved him, and kept his commandments. He has always had a people that did not break his commandments daily in thought, word, and deed: There was Job, of whom God said, "A perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil." There was Enoch who "walked with God" and "was not, for God took him." There was Zacharias and Elizabeth who "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." There was John the Baptist who was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. There was Joseph who was sold into Egypt, but who loved his brethren who sold him into Egypt, and kept himself pure in the matter of Potiphar's wife. There was Daniel who was taken captive to Babylon, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and all the holy prophets and holy apostles, and all the saints of both the Old and New Testaments. The Bible clearly teaches that God's people can and do live without sin. Therefore, the doctrine of original sin, which teaches otherwise, is a myth and a lie.

The four Scripture verses quoted earlier in this chapter (I John 3:6, I John 3:9, I John 5:4, I John 5:18) clearly teach that Christians do not have to commit sin. They show that there is no original sin, no corrupt sinful nature that makes sin necessary in the life of the Christian. Two of these verses have been very difficult for Christians to understand. They are I John 3:6 and I John 3:9. I John 3:6 seems to teach that anyone who commits sin never really knew God in the first place, and I John 3:9 seems to teach that it is absolutely impossible for the Christian to commit sin. An understanding of the tenses of the Greek verb does away with this misunderstanding.

In I John 3:6 the verb form *menon* is a present participle which emphasizes continuing action. It means is abiding or is remaining. The verb form *hamartanei* is the present active. It can denote either

continuous or simple action. It means sins or is sinning. Next, the verb form hamartanōn is used. It is a present participle which denotes continuous action. It means is sinning. The last two verb forms in I John 3:6 are heoraken and egnoken. They are both perfect active. The perfect denotes completed action in the past with results that continue into the present. So that heoraken means seen and continued to see and egnoken means known and continued to know. I John 3:6, then, has the following meaning:

"Whosoever is remaining in him sins not; whosoever is sinning has not seen him and continued to see him, neither known him and continued to know him."

So the fact that a Christian may commit sin does not mean that he never really knew God. What it does mean is that by committing sin, he is not continuing to abide in Christ, and by committing sin, he does not continue to see and know Christ, whom he once saw and knew. You cannot sin against God and remain in him at the same time. You cannot sin against God and continue to see and know him at the same time.

In I John 3:9 the verb form gegennēmenos is a perfect passive participle which emphasizes completed action in the past with results that continue into the present. It means has been born and continues to be born. The verb forms poiei, menei, and dunatai are all present active which denotes continuous or simple action in the present. The meaning of each one, respectively, is: do or is doing, remain or is remaining, and can or is able. The verb form hamartanein is a present infinitive which emphasizes continuous action. It means to continue to sin or to go on sinning. The verb form gegennetai is the perfect passive. It denotes completed action in the past with results that continue into the present. It means has been born and continues to be born. I John 3:9, then has the following meaning:

"Whosoever has been born of God and continues to be born of God does not do sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot continue to sin, because he has been born of God and continues to be born of God."

This verse does not teach that it is impossible for the Christian to sin. What it does teach is that it is impossible to stand begotten of God and go on sinning. The born-again experience and the committing of sin are self-excluding. One cannot exist where the other exists. If you have the

seed of God in you and if you stand begotten of God, you cannot commit sin. If you commit sin, you cannot stand begotten of God.

These two verses militate mightily against the doctrine of original sin. They teach that the Christian who remains in Christ and continues to see and know Christ and continues to stand begotten of God both does not and cannot sin. Surely if it is true that "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," then there is no original sin, no corrupt Adamic sin nature in the Christian that makes it necessary for the Christian to commit sin. If it is true that "Whatsoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," then surely there is no indwelling sin in the Christian that makes sin necessary and obedience to God's commandments impossible.

God testifies that "His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." I John 5:3, 4. If "The commandments of God are not grievous..." and if "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world..." then there can be no original sin that makes God's commandments grievous and that makes them so impossible to keep that believers cannot overcome the world. The commandments of God are not grievous. They are not more than we can bear. They do not require what is impossible for us to do.

No, God is not a hard taskmaster. He requires of us only what we are able to do. If we had a sin nature which made it impossible for us to serve and obey him, he would not command: "Be ye holy, for I am holy." He would not say, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." But God does command us to be holy. He does require us to be perfect. So either God is requiring impossibilities and he has commandments that are grievous, or there is no original sin.

I John 3:6 and 3:9 also militate mightily against the doctrine of "once saved, always saved" and "once a child of God, always a child of God." Those who believe that once you are saved, you can never be lost equate physical birth and spiritual birth, and say, "I may be a disobedient child of my father, but I will forever remain my father's child." They seem not to realize that everything that is true about physical birth is not true about spiritual birth. There is an analogy between physical and spiritual birth, but no equation. If there is an equation between physical and spiritual birth, then we must forever remain the children of the devil. Isn't

that true? Doesn't the Bible teach that all sinners are children of the devil? We should realize that we were all children of the devil before we ever knew God and became his children. John 8:44, I John 3:8, 10, 12. Must we, therefore, forever remain the children of the devil because we were once his children? There is no equation between physical and spiritual birth. One cannot continue in sin and remain a child of God. "He that committeth sin is of the devil" and not of God. I John 3:8.

I John 3:6 and 3:9 show that the Christian who remains in Christ and stands begotten of God does not and cannot commit sin. This shows that it is a myth that there is a corrupt sinful nature inherited from Adam in Christians that makes sin in their lives a necessity as long as they are in this life. Nevertheless, men still plead a sinful nature as an excuse for their sins. They plead a sinful nature as an excuse for lukewarm and partial service to God. Then, even though they know they are defrauding God, they will say, "I may be a disobedient child of my Father, but I will always remain my Father's child." Oh, how men deceive themselves who think they can disobey God in some things and still remain the children of God for their obedience in other things! Such a religion is motivated by selfishness and is the religion of devils.

The doctrine of original sin is an evil doctrine and a doctrine of lies. It makes men deny that they are able to obey God and makes them excuse themselves while they commit sin. But there is no excuse for sin. If there were, God could not and would not command men to turn from all sin. But God does command men to turn from all sin and because God commands men to turn from sin we know that men can live without sin and that the doctrine of original sin is a lie.

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. I John 3:6

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. I John 3:9

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. I John 5:4

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. I John 5:18

But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I

also hate. Rev. 2:6

So has thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Rev. 2:15

Chapter 12

GOD HATES FALSE DOCTRINE

"I hate the doctrine of the Nicolaitans." Rev. 2:15. The Bible does not tell us who the Nicolaitans were. But most Bible scholars believe they were one of the Gnostic sects. Gnosticism began to have a corrupting influence upon Christianity as early as the first century A.D. John, in two of his epistles, refuted the doctrine taught by them that Christ did not come in the flesh, in a physical body. I John 4:2, 3; II John 7. This Gnostic doctrine was taught to preserve Christ from the pollution of sin, since they believed that man's flesh was inherently sinful. Whether the Nicolaitans were or were not one of the Gnostic sects cannot be conclusively proved. They probably were, but that is not the important point. What is important is to know that they taught false doctrine and that God hates false doctrine because all false doctrine works evil.

One of the veiled objections I have heard to the question of whether men are born sinners or not, is: "What difference does it make? We are all sinners and need to be saved anyway." This objection implies that it doesn't make a difference whether we were born sinners or not, as long as we recognize we are sinners and need to be saved. However, what we believe does make a difference. We need to do away with this friendly, cozy attitude toward false doctrine that says, "What difference does it make?" Doesn't what we believe concerning the origin of our sin have an effect upon our conduct and how we view sin, God and the Bible? Doesn't it make a difference in our attitude toward our sin, our guilt, and our ill desert whether or not we believe that we are condemned for a sin which we did not commit, and which was committed thousands of years before we had our existence? Doesn't it make a difference in our attitude toward God whether or not we believe that the heathen, who have never heard the Gospel and had a chance to be saved, were created by God with a corrupt sinful nature which makes sin unavoidable and their damnation inevitable? Doesn't it make a difference in our attitude toward living a separated and a holy Christian life whether or not we believe that we are born with a morally depraved physical constitution that makes sin unavoidable and holiness impossible?

Doesn't this false doctrine make a difference in our thinking concerning

all the true doctrines of the Bible? John had to denounce the false teachers of his day who would not accept the biblical doctrines of Christ's incarnation, i.e., that Christ came in the flesh, because they believed the false doctrine that the physical nature of man was polluted and inherently sinful. And now, those who believe in the doctrine of original sin are compelled by this false belief to believe that Christ was not really a man with a nature like other men, as the Bible teaches, but that he was somehow different in his humanity, with a different human nature than all the rest of mankind. A belief in this false doctrine does make a difference. It affects how we view and interpret all the true doctrines of the Bible. It affects our attitude toward God, the Creator of our nature. It affects our attitude toward our sin and our guilt. It affects our attitude toward everything that is connected with the doctrine of sin. God hates this Nicolaitan doctrine because it has a corrupting influence on the Christian's conduct, attitudes, and thinking. No other false doctrine has so profoundly warped the Christian's understanding of the biblical doctrines of sin, holiness, and God's grace to deliver from sin. This false doctrine makes sin necessary, holiness impossible, and the power of God's grace nothing but a feeble, empty promise. Listen to what the doctrine of original sin promises the Christian:

This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated..." Westminster Confession

By reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil. Westminster Confession

They deplore their inability to love their Redeemer, to keep themselves from sin, to live a holy life in any degree adequate to their own convictions of their obligations...They recognize it as the fruit and evidence of the corruption of their nature derived as a sad inheritance from their first parents. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 273

No man is able by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed. Larger Catechism

But the Word of God promises something completely contrary to the false teaching of original sin. It promises a new birth, a new life, and total

deliverance from all sin. Paul said, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." I Cor. 5:17. The angel said to Joseph: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1:21. Jesus said, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:34, 36 Paul repeated again and again in Romans that the Christian is made free from sin through the grace of God in Christ Jesus:

How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Rom. 6:2

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Rom. 6:6

Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Rom. 6:14

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered unto you. Being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness. Rom. 6:17, 18

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Rom. 6:22

Is God telling lies when he makes these promises? If the doctrine of original sin is true, he is, and he is also powerless to destroy the dominion of sin in the heart of those who put their trust in him. Such a low concept of God's grace does not bring much honor and glory to him. In fact, those who really believe the doctrine of original sin gravely dishonor him by believing the doctrine that his grace and the presence of his indwelling Holy Spirit are infinitely less powerful than sin.

The doctrine of original sin is a grossly false doctrine that demeans the power of God's grace and soothes the conscience of worldly professors of religion. Great evil has been done in the church by this false philosophy of sin. It should be banished from pulpits, and the truth of the liberating power of God's grace preached to those who hunger for God's righteousness and holiness in their lives.

What are you going to do with the doctrine of original sin? Randolph S. Foster makes some penetrating comments on the moral turpitude of

clinging to error once we know the truth:

The known and willful support or perpetuation of an error is a crime against humanity and a sin against Him who is Truth. To cling to error or defend error when one has reason to suspect it may be error reveals a heart that does not fully love the truth for the truth's sake.

To strenuously support and shield from scrutiny what we believe when we are aware that its truth is questionable reveals a heart that is not completely candid. We are supposed to be children of light, and to be afraid to shine light upon what we believe shows a love still for darkness.

To stop short in curable error is criminal; to cherish delusions after we have been forced to suspect them is debasing to our moral nature.

To persist in a belief against evidence, to refuse evidence, or avoid proof...shows insincerity and lack of moral integrity.

Slavish adherence to inherited traditions, merely on the ground of their wide acceptance and long continuance, would forbid the overthrow of error and the acceptance of redeeming truth. If a doctrine cannot bear the light of the Scriptures and reason If it is shown to be false and unreasonable under their burning light, it must consent to shrivel up and perish with all other error.

One more passage from Randolph S. Foster's Studies in Theology states:

Although all men have an innate and genuine thirst after truth and a corresponding disgust for error, there may exist, strange as it may seem, extreme opposition to the acceptance of certain truths an absolute hatred of them, because they differ from what we now believe, because they require changes in us which we do not want to make, because they require the confession that we have been mistaken and have held error so the mind will not give them fair treatment It hardens against them and imposes unjust tests and will not give them the courtesy of fair and respectful attention. Prejudices, vicious habits of thought, pride of opinion and of denominational belief, ignorance, suspicion, bigotry, blind following of religious and denominational leaders so becloud and benumb the mind that it cannot and will not see its own errors, or the truth of others when with a little unprejudiced examination the truth could be seen.

To cling to a doctrine which we know to be false is sin. God hates false

doctrine, and as Christians, we cannot take neutral ground respecting the things that God hates. With God, there is no neutral ground.

The doctrine of original sin has corrupted Christian theology and spawned a false teaching of inability that excuses sin in the Church of Christ. It is difficult to find a Christian today who believes it is possible to live without sin. "The key of knowledge" has been taken away by this doctrine. Ministers "have not entered in themselves" and they have "hindered them that were entering in." Matt. 23:13, Luke 11:52. With this grossly false doctrine men have been taught that they can never expect to fully obey their Lord until they die and go to heaven. They have been taught that they will live more or less in rebellion against God as long as they are here on earth. What a low opinion this doctrine permits men to have of God's power and sanctifying grace! The church's idea of the grace of God is only that it forgives us while we continue in sin. God hates this Nicolaitan doctrine! Can we go on giving place to such a God dishonoring doctrine? Can we accept a doctrine that allows men to believe that they will go to heaven without holiness? Can we coddle a doctrine that excuses sin in the churches and that stumbles professing Christians into hell? Can we any longer embrace a doctrine that God hates?

Footnotes on "Are Men Born Sinners"

1. Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1953, p. 249.
2. Morris Kline, *Mathematics in Western Culture*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1980, p. 123.
3. Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1953, p. 252.
4. See Appendix A, *The Nature and Attributes of Sin*, p. 165.
5. Henry C. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine*, Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati, 1912, pp. 313-314.
6. See further commentary on Romans 5:12-21 in the anthology.
7. A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, Fleming H. Revell, Old Tappan,

1969, p. 597.

8. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, Wm B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1946, pp. 223-224.
9. L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1972, pp. 241-242.
10. L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, pp. 198-199
11. Strong, Systematic Theology, pp. 615-616.
12. Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 308.
13. Strong, Systematic Theology, p. 618.
14. Henry C. Sheldon, System of Christian Doctrine, pp. 320-321.
15. Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, p. 252.
16. Albert Henry Newman, Manual of Church History, Vol I, The American Baptist Publication society, Philadelphia, 1942, p. 362.
17. Adolf Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol V., Russell & Russell, new york, 1958, p. 102.
18. Newman, Manual of Church History, Vol I, p. 197.
19. Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol V., p. 211.
20. Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol V., p. 212.
21. Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol V., pp. 212-214.
22. Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol V., p. 78.
23. Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol V., p. 310.
24. Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol V., p. 310.
25. See Appendix B. The Age of Accountability, p. 169.
26. See Appendix C. The Rational Moral Nature of Man, p. 173.
27. See Appendix D, The bible and Man's Ratinal Moral Nature, p. 175.
28. See Appendix E, Temptation, The occasion of all Sin, p. 177.

29. Sheldon, System of Christian Doctrine, pp. 276-277.
30. See Appendix F, The Folly of Taking Text Out of Context, p. 179.
31. Sheldon, System of Christian Doctrine, p. 320.
32. Kline, Mathematics in Western Culture, p. 123.
33. See Appendix G. Bible Texts Can Be Used to Prove Lies, p. 187.
34. Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, pp. 250-252.
35. Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol V., pp. 211-212.
36. George Park Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, C. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1901, p. 196.
37. Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 308.
38. Sheldon, System of Christian Doctrine, p. 320.
39. Strong, Systematic Theology, p. 597.
40. Randolph S. Foster, Studies in Theology, Vol. 1, Cranston & Stowe, Cincinnati, 1890, pp. 9,10,18,25,29.
41. Foster, Studies in Theology, Vol. 1, p. 31.

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Westminster Confession

Appendix A

The Nature and Attributes of Sin

Man must sin to be a sinner.

The foregoing statement may seem too obvious to need stating, and something that no one could deny. But those who advocate the doctrine of original sin both ignore what is clearly obvious and deny what is palpably undeniable. They teach that an infant who has never sinned is not only a sinner, but is guilty, condemned and under God's wrath.

But, what is sin? The Bible says, "Sin is the transgression of the law." I John 3:4. But what law does a newborn baby transgress by being born? Has God given a law that makes it a sin to be born? But if children violate no law in being born, then they are surely not sinners. One might as well call a man a drunkard who has never tasted drink, or a man a thief who has never stolen, or a man a murderer who has never killed, as to say that an infant who has never sinned is a sinner.

Or does God's law legislate over our nature, requiring us to be born with a certain nature? No, God has given no law requiring us to be born with a certain nature. The fact is that God is satisfied with the nature he has given us. He legislates only over the use we make of our nature. Since sin is the transgression of the law, an understanding of the nature of law will give us a clearer understanding of the nature of sin.

1. Law, in its generic sense, is any rule of action.
2. Physical law is a rule of necessary or involuntary action. The law of gravity is a physical law. The law of gravity is a rule of action that operates by a law of necessity or force as opposed to freedom and voluntary choice.
3. Moral law is a rule of free and intelligent action as opposed to involuntary or necessary action.

It is the rule for the government of free and intelligent action, as opposed to necessary and unintelligent action. It is the law of liberty, as opposed to the law of necessity--of motive and free choice, as opposed to force of every kind. Moral law is primarily a rule of the direction of the action of free will and strictly of free will only.¹

We see then what must be the necessary attributes of sin. They must be liberty, voluntariness, and intelligence. By the word intelligence, it is not meant that sin is a good or reasonable choice. It is meant that the choice to sin is made with the full knowledge that it is wrong. It is an intelligent choice because the sinner knows the moral character of his actions before he sins. He knows that he is doing wrong, and if he had no knowledge of right and wrong, he could not sin. Moral law, then, cannot govern the actions of infants, who have no knowledge of right and wrong. A moral agent is a moral agent only because he has an understanding of the moral character of his actions. Infants, therefore, cannot be sinners.

Liberty, or freedom, is another attribute of sin. Without liberty there could be no such thing as sin. It is affirmed that babies are born sinners. Have they had the liberty to make a choice about this? Are they free to choose not to be born sinners? If not, then they cannot be born sinners. To speak of them being sinners involuntarily and by a law of necessity is to talk utter nonsense. Liberty, or freedom to choose (free moral agency), is a necessary attribute of sin, and if there is no liberty, there can be no sin.

The very idea of sin implies free choice. It implies that the sinner is free to do good instead of evil, and that he is able to avoid sin. If his actions are not free, and if his actions are necessitated, his deeds cannot have moral character and he cannot be a sinner. To talk of being born a sinner is the same nonsense as to talk of a wicked gun. If man is a sinner by birth, he can no more be wicked or sinful than the gun which is used to commit murder can be wicked or sinful. A sinner is a sinner only because his actions are free. Without free choice, sin cannot exist.

Voluntariness is an attribute of sin. Children cannot be born sinners because their birth is involuntary. They do not choose to be born. Their birth is completely involuntary. An involuntary sinner, a sinner by birth, is a contradiction because one of the attributes of sin is voluntariness. It is a contradiction of terms to speak of being born a sinner. The term sinner implies liberty, voluntariness, and intelligence. So to speak of being born a sinner is to speak of an impossibility. It is to use terms which contradict each other.

By necessity the attributes of sin are liberty, intelligence, and voluntariness. Any doctrine that assumes, as does the doctrine of original sin, that sin can be predicated of unfree, involuntary, and unintelligent

action is absurd. There can be no unfree, involuntary, and unintelligent sin. All of these attributes pertain to physical law, rather than moral law, and completely negate the idea of sin.

Appendix B

The "Age of Accountability"

The term "age of accountability" is not used in the Bible. Nevertheless, the doctrine of an age or a time when men become accountable for their actions is clearly taught in the Bible. What is meant by this term is that children cannot be accountable for their actions until they have a knowledge of good and evil, until they know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

We know that children are not sinners at birth; for if they were, there could be no such thing as an "age of accountability." If babies are guilty and condemned for the sin of Adam from birth, then there is no room for them to reach a certain age before they become accountable. They are guilty and under God's wrath from birth. However, the Bible teaches that babies do not inherit sin and guilt from Adam. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil..." Rom. 9:11. Jacob and Esau had no original sin; they did not sin with Adam when he transgressed. We know this because they were not sinners while in the womb of their mother, Rebecca. Since the Bible says they had done nothing good or evil up to this time, we must assume that they became moral agents at some later time, after they were born. There are numerous verses like this in the Bible which show the doctrine of original sin to be false, and which also teach, either directly or indirectly, the doctrine of an "age of accountability." Let us look at some of them:

Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. Deut. 1:39

For before the children shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. Isaiah 7:16

I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. Gen. 8:21

Deut. 1:39 speaks of the "little ones" and the "children" who "in that day had no knowledge between good and evil." Isaiah 7:16 speaks of a child

coming to an age when he knows to "refuse the evil, and choose the good." Both of these texts speak of children coming to a time in their lives when they have a knowledge of the moral character of their actions and know there is evil which they ought to refuse and good which they ought to choose. Neither of these verses gives a certain age at which moral agency begins. This is because there is no fixed age at which children become accountable, since reason will develop earlier in one child than another according to his gifts and circumstances. But when a child's reason has developed to the point that he knows to "refuse the evil and choose the good," he becomes a moral agent and is accountable for his deeds.

This possession of moral knowledge or understanding is absolutely necessary before there can be accountability. A child must know the moral character of his actions before he can be responsible for them.

Some advocates of original sin have objected that the government of God would be unjust if children were made accountable for their actions at a tender age when they would not be able easily to withstand temptation. They have used this objection as an excuse for maintaining the doctrine of original sin. This kind of logic is absurd. For, according to the doctrine of original sin, children are guilty and under the wrath of God from birth, without any probation. It is hard to understand how the advocates of original sin can swallow whole the injustice of being born in a state of guilt and condemnation, and yet quibble over the supposed injustice of becoming accountable at a tender age. This amounts to swallowing a camel and straining at a gnat.

With God, there can be no such thing as a "tender age" in the sense of an unjust age at which children become responsible. God alone knows and is the judge of when a child reaches the "age of accountability." He alone knows the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. And, knowing that God is just, we know that God will not work unrighteousness in this respect. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Gen. 18:25. Those who make this objection seem to feel that God cannot be trusted with what is unknown to us. But he can be trusted. God is just in all his judgments. The accountability or non-accountability of every child is perfectly known to God. He "searches the reins and hearts" of all men. He discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart." He will bring to light the "hidden things of darkness" and judge the "secrets of men" in truth

and righteousness.

The advocates of original sin need not fear that God will unjustly make children accountable at too early an age. He can be trusted to judge righteously with the hidden things of the heart. Truth, justice, and equity are the foundations of his throne. I Cor. 4:5, Rev. 2:23, Heb. 4:12-13, Eccl. 12:14, Rom. 2:15-16.

Appendix C

The Rational Moral Nature of Man

That man is responsible and accountable for his deeds is so obvious that to try to prove it would be something like a teacher of first graders trying to prove to them that the sun exists. The class might well interrupt: "But teacher, we know that the sun exists. See, there it is in the sky."

When God gave the law on Mount Sinai, he did not try to prove first to his people that they were responsible and accountable moral agents. They already knew this because of the testimony of their rational nature. They were as conscious of their responsibility and accountability as they were that the sun existed. The law of God was already written in their hearts before God gave them the law written upon tables of stone. They already knew right from wrong before God said, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." They already had a conscience and knew themselves to be accountable for their deeds before God warned them of judgment for disobedience. They did not need proof of their accountability, for this they had by the constant testimony of their rational moral nature. No one needs the Bible in order to know right from wrong. Murder, adultery, lying, and stealing are not wrong just because the Bible says they are wrong. They are wrong by nature. They are wrong because they violate the demands of the rational moral nature with which God created us.

The law that God has given us is not arbitrary or imposed; it is declaratory. God has declared to us the same law that is revealed in our nature, the same law that is written in our hearts, a law that harmonizes with our nature, necessities, and relations as moral beings. Had God given us a law that contradicted our nature--had he commanded us to be selfish, to work evil to our neighbor, to lie, steal, and hate our fellow man--we would all know by the testimony of our rational, moral nature that such a law was wrong and unjust. It is only because the law of God does agree with the law written in our hearts that we can and do judge it to be a just and righteous law.

This agreement between the rational moral nature of man and the teachings of the Bible gives compelling testimony to the truth of the Bible. Men do not need to have proved to them that the Bible is divinely inspired anymore than they need someone to prove that the sun exists. Their own

moral nature is in such agreement with the holy teachings of the Bible, that it is a battle for wicked men to resist and smother the convictions they have when they hear the preaching of God's Word.

Appendix D

The Bible and Man's Rational Moral Nature

If the Bible taught things which were out of harmony with man's rational moral nature and if the Bible taught things which the constitution of our nature as created by God forced us to reject as false, unjust, or impossible, we would have irresistible convictions that it was not the Word of God, and it would be impossible for us to rationally believe it.

It is because the Bible is in harmony with man's rational moral nature and his knowledge of truth and reality that men have compelling convictions that it is the Word of God. It is so in harmony with the revelation and convictions given to us by our nature, it describes us so faithfully--our moral relations, our lost condition, and our necessity as lost sinners--that we have compelling evidence that it is not a man-made book, but is divinely inspired.

Christians are not gullible because they believe the Bible. They are reasonable and rational. They are living in accordance with the testimony of their rational moral nature, which affirms that the Bible is in harmony with truth, justice, and reality, and is therefore from God, just as it says it is.

On the other hand, those who refuse to believe the Bible are irrational. They are rejecting the testimony of their rational, moral nature which affirms the truth of the Bible. The impenitent sinner is not impenitent because his reason does not testify to him of the truth of God's Word; he is impenitent because he refuses to listen to reason. He does not want to repent, submit himself to God, and obey his Word. Both sin and unbelief are a voluntary resistance and abuse of the dazzling moral light given to man in his moral nature.

If the Bible were in manifest contradiction to reason, no man could believe it without being irrational. But when we look into the mirror of our nature and see the exact same image pictured there as is pictured for us in the Bible, we know that the Bible is the Word of God. If the image in the mirror of our nature were different than that pictured in the Bible, we would know that the Bible was false and not the Word of God. However, our nature agrees in every aspect with the revelation given to us in the Bible. This harmony between the Bible and our own moral nature is

supernatural. The harmony is so complete, so exact, and so faithful--it mirrors man's nature and condition so faithfully--that such a harmony would be impossible upon any other supposition than that the Bible is indeed a supernatural book, inspired by God.

Appendix E

Temptation: The Occasion to All Sin

The devil, who was originally one of the holy angels, was tempted and fell from his original perfection, without a sinful nature to make him sin. A third of the holy angels were tempted and fell from their original perfection, without a sinful nature to make them sin. Holy Adam and Eve were tempted and fell from their original perfection, without a sinful nature to make them sin. How absurd is the idea, then, that the universal sinfulness of Adam's descendants can only be explained by a sinful nature inherited from Adam.

The Bible teaches that temptation is the occasion to all sin. Paul tells us that temptation is common to all men. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man..." I Cor. 10:13. James tells us that temptation is the occasion to sin. "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." James 1:14, 15. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that our Lord was "tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4:15. The following are only a few of the Scripture references which speak of the universality of temptation, of the fact that temptation is the occasion to sin, and of the agency of the devil in tempting men: James 1:14-15; I Cor. 10:13; Heb. 4:15; Luke 4:2-13; Matt. 26:41; Matt. 6:13; I Peter 1:6; II Peter 2:9; I Thess. 3:5; Luke 8:12; Matt. 13:38-39; John 3:8; Rev. 12:9; II Tim. 2:26; Eph. 4:27; Eph. 6:11; James 4:7; I Peter 5:8-9.

If the doctrine of original sin is true, the devil is in complete ignorance of it. Or if he is not ignorant of it, he is dumb enough to go to the trouble of tempting men for nothing. Would the devil tempt men if he knew that they had a sinful nature which would make them sin without being tempted? How foolish and ignorant the devil must be. If the doctrine of original sin is true, then Jesus and the inspired writers lived in complete ignorance of it, as well. Jesus exhorted his followers to watch and pray that they not enter into temptation, and he taught them to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Matt. 26:41, Matt. 6:12. His Apostles, in their writings, exhorted the believers to be on their guard against the snares of the devil, lest they be tempted and fall into sin. I Peter 5:8-9, Eph. 6:11-12. These would have been useless exhortations if all

Christians have a sinful nature which makes them sin without being tempted. In fact, if the doctrine of original sin is true, Jesus and the inspired writers lived under a complete cloud of ignorance. Instead of ascribing the sins of mankind to a physical connection with Adam, they ascribed them to a moral connection with the tempter--the devil. They spoke of sinners as being children of the devil and as being of their father the devil (I John 3:8-10, John 8:44, Acts 13:10). They spoke of the sins of mankind as being the work of the devil and of sinners becoming sinners by the agency of the devil. Matt. 13:38-39. They spoke of Christ as coming to destroy the works of the devil. I John 3:8. Finally, they spoke of the sinner as being a captive of the devil, who needed to recover himself out of the devil's snare. II Tim. 2:26. It is hard to understand how they could have been so far off the track if the doctrine of original sin were true.

The Bible teaches nothing about an inherited sinful nature from Adam. It teaches only that all men are tempted and that they sin when they yield to their own desires rather than obey the law of God and reason.

Appendix F

The Folly of Taking Text out of Context

In answering the objection in chapter five that "Paul taught that the flesh is sinful and that sin dwells in the flesh," I made the statement that "Every kind of foolish and superstitious belief can be proved from the Bible if it is not interpreted according to the demands of context, language, common sense, and reality." As an illustration of this, I referred the reader to the passage in Romans 7:14-25, which is used to teach that the Apostle Paul was himself in bondage to sin at the time he wrote his epistle to the Romans.

Let us look at this passage and see how it is misinterpreted by not paying due regard to language, context, common sense, and reality:

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Rom. 7:14-25.

If we read this passage without paying any attention to its context, it looks like Paul the Apostle was a total slave to his lusts and passions at the time he wrote this epistle. But if we give attention to its context, we know that the Apostle was not describing his own experience at all in the above passage. He spoke in the first person, and uses the word I, not to describe his own personal experience, but as a literary device to illustrate the total bondage of the convicted sinner to his fleshly desires and

passions. That Paul used himself as an example or illustration of one who was in carnal servitude to the law, and not to describe his own personal experience, is seen, first of all, by the language he uses:

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.
Rom. 7:14

Now Paul was a Christian, and Christians are not "carnal, sold under sin." Instead, they are spiritual and redeemed from sin. Paul was describing the experiences of someone who did not yet know Christ, who was still in bondage to his sins (carnal, sold under sin), and was face to face with a spiritual law. And he speaks in the first person, using himself to illustrate the bondage of this convicted sinner, who was trying to obey a spiritual law without Christ and the liberating power of God's grace.

But Paul's conclusion in verses 24 and 25 shows that what he was illustrating was not a Christian experience because he declared that Christ delivers from it:

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Many Christians have stumbled over the last part of verse 25, which says "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" and have concluded that after all the Apostle had said about being delivered through our Lord Jesus Christ, that he was still in bondage to sin. But the last part of this verse is merely his summing up of all he had said before about the bondage of the convicted sinner who is struggling to keep the righteousness of a spiritual law without Christ. This is a recapitulation to emphasize one more time that, without the deliverance that comes through the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinner will forever remain a slave to his fleshly lusts. He may be convicted by the law, he may see the exceeding sinfulness of his sins, he may make resolutions in his mind to do what is good and right, but he will forever remain a slave to his fleshly lusts unless delivered from sin by our Lord Jesus Christ.

To teach from this passage that the Apostle Paul was living in bondage to sin when he wrote this epistle is to completely take his words out of context. For example, look at chapter six. It does not teach that Paul or

any other Christian is in bondage to sin. Paul teaches in this chapter that Christ completely delivers from the power of sin:

verse 2 "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

verse 6 "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

(The "old man" that was crucified with Christ and the "body of sin" that was destroyed here in the sixth verse was not our literal body of flesh, but rather the sinful moral person we were before we came to Christ. Paul uses figurative language in this verse to speak of the moral and spiritual change wrought in us by the grace of Christ.)

verse 14 "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law but under grace."

verse 17 "Ye were the servants of sin..."

verse 18 "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

verse 20 "When ye were the servants of sin..."

verse 22 "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Paul shows in chapter six of Romans that Christ completely frees the believer from the dominion of sin. He continues in chapter seven to show that the law has no such power. Those who are familiar with the Bible will know that in chapter three of Romans, Paul shows that no one can be justified by the law, since all, both Jews and Gentiles, have sinned and are condemned by the law. Then, in chapter seven of Romans, he shows that the law cannot sanctify. It cannot deliver the sinner from the awful bondage of his sins and make him holy. The law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12) but it is powerless to make the sinner himself holy, just, and good. The law gives no life; it only brings conviction of the "exceeding sinfulness" of sin (Rom. 7:13) and pronounces judgment upon the sinner for his sins. The Apostle's argument is that the law is absolutely powerless to break the power of sin or inspire holiness. It is only through our union with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:4-6) that we receive life and grace and are set free from the bondage of sin.

It was after showing the glorious power of Christ to deliver from the bondage of sin, and the utter inability of the law to do anything more than judge and convict of sin, that the Apostle uses himself as an illustration of one who is in the bondage of a carnal servitude to the law--one who is convicted by the law of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but still unable by the motives of the law to free himself from his fleshly passions and lusts. But, if Paul were describing in Rom. 7:14-25 his own Christian experience or the experience of any other Christian, it would directly contradict everything he said in both chapters six and eight about the Christian being freed from sin. It is impossible that the Apostle could be inspired by the Holy Spirit to teach the contradiction that the Christian is both gloriously saved by Christ from his sins and at the same time a total slave to them. This is the folly of interpreting a text without giving attention to its context.

It is sad that many who call themselves Christians have misused this text in Romans 7:14-25 to excuse their sins, saying that even the great Apostle Paul could not overcome sin, and that they don't consider themselves to be any greater or more spiritual than he. They say that they are having the same experience that the Apostle Paul had in Romans seven, that sin dwells in them the same as it dwelt in Paul, and that we all have inherited the same old Adamic sin nature. They will say that if the Apostle Paul could not overcome sin, they don't see how they can expect to live without sin. I heard one preacher's comment in the Sunday morning service after having read this passage. His comment was "I'm glad this is in the Bible; it makes me feel a lot better." He assumed that Paul was describing his own Christian experience, and it relieved his conscience to know that the Apostle Paul was in bondage to sin just like other Christians. But the person who uses this passage to relieve his conscience and to convince himself that he is a Christian while living in bondage to sin is deceiving himself. He is not a Christian. No man is a Christian who is a slave to sin. Christ sets his people free from their sins.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,

condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Rom. 8:1-4

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Rom. 8:7-10

If Rom. 7:14-25 were a description of Paul's own Christian experience, it would directly contradict the Christian experience he describes above. He says, "There is now no condemnation"; "Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"; and "The righteousness of the law" is "fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." The experience he described in Romans seven was a woeful experience, filled with condemnation, bondage, sin, and death. Is it conceivable that all the Christians to whom Paul wrote were victorious, sin free, uncondemned Christians, and that Paul alone was a condemned, sin enslaved Christian? That would have to be the fact if Paul were truly describing his own Christian experience in Rom. 7:14-25. Let's compare the experience Paul describes in Rom. 7:14-25 with what he taught to be the Christian's victory over sin through Christ. First, Paul said of the experience of one under the law without Christ:

--I am carnal, sold under sin. Rom. 7:14

--Sin dwells in my flesh. Rom. 7:14, 20

--I am in the flesh. Rom. 7:18

--There is absolutely nothing good in me, and I can do absolutely nothing good. Rom. 7:18

--I can't do good, and I can't refrain from evil. Rom. 7:15,18

--Although I recognize the law to be holy, just, and good, it is absolutely impossible for me to obey it. Rom. 7:22,23

--I war against sin but I am continually overcome by sin and made its slave. Rom. 7:23

--I am condemned, I am wretched, and I need deliverance from the dominion of this body of sin and death. Who can deliver me? Rom. 7:24

None of the above verses describes the experience of a Christian. Paul taught that for the Christian:

--There is now no condemnation. Rom. 8:1

--Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom. 8:2

--The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. Rom. 8:4

--The Christian is not carnal and not in the flesh, but in the spirit; and that the Spirit of Christ and of God dwells in him. Rom. 8:7-10

--That the Christian's body is dead because of sin, and that his mortal body has been quickened by the Holy Spirit that dwells in him. Rom. 8:10, 11

We can be certain that Paul was not describing his own Christian experience in Rom. 7:14-25, for we find that he said he was carnal, that he was sold under sin, that he had a carnal mind (which, he says later in chapter eight) was enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, and that neither indeed could be. He said that he was definitely in the flesh, and that he still had a sinful body, a body of death, or a sinful body condemned to death, which he cried out to be delivered from.

On the other hand, he told the Christians in chapters six and eight that they were not carnal, but spiritual; that they were no longer walking after the flesh; that they were not sold under sin, but gloriously delivered from the bondage of sin; that they did not have a carnal mind, but a spiritual mind; that they were not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; and that they did not have a sinful body, but that their body was dead. Now, if Paul was describing his own bondage to sin in Rom. 7:14-25, then he was describing his own bondage and slavery to sin at the same time that he declared all the Christians to whom he wrote to be gloriously liberated from the bondage of sin. Such an inconsistent conclusion can only be reached as a result of ignoring context, language, common sense, and reality in interpreting the Scriptures.

No one can come to the Bible with a sincere heart, and read all of

chapters six, seven, and eight of Romans, comparing chapter seven with chapters six and eight, and then come away believing that Paul was describing his own Christian experience in Rom. 7:14-25. It is impossible. The contradictions involved in such an interpretation are too obvious.

Appendix G

Bible Texts Can Be Used to Prove Lies

By taking Bible texts out of their context and isolating them from the rest of the Bible, it is possible to prove almost any lie. In this way, false cults have used the Bible to prove the lie that there is no everlasting punishment for the wicked, but that the wicked will be annihilated or destroyed. Malachi 4:1, 3; Isaiah 1:28; Psalm 145:20; Rom. 9:22. False cults have used the Bible to prove the lie that after death men cease to exist. Eccl. 3:19, Eccl 9:5-6. They have used the Bible to prove the lie that Jesus was created by God and was not the divine and eternally existing Son of God. Col. 1:15, Rev. 3:14.

The Bible can be used to prove the most frightening of lies. It can be used to prove the lie that God is the creator and originator of evil and that men sin because God hardens their hearts and makes them sin. Isaiah 45:7; Amos 3:6; Ex. 4:21; Ex. 10:1, 20, 27; Ex. 11:10; Ex. 14:17; Deut. 2:30; Rom. 9:18.

The Bible can be used to prove the lie that the Christian who turns from God and commits just one sin is hopelessly doomed--that he can never be forgiven and restored to God again.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. Heb. 6:4-6

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. Heb. 10:25-27.

Now the above two texts, standing alone and without reference to their context and the teaching of the whole Bible, would teach conclusively that the Christian who willfully sins or backslides is doomed to judgment

without any chance of forgiveness or restoration.

Another lie that can be proved with the Bible is that it is impossible for the Christian to sin, and that if he does commit sin, it shows that he never really was a Christian and never really knew God.

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. I John 3:6

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. I John 3:9

The above two verses, when taken by themselves, and without reference to the rest of the Bible, clearly teach that a Christian cannot sin, and that if he does sin, it shows that he never really knew God in the first place.

So, by ripping texts from their context and isolating them from the rest of the Bible and thus breaking the two most fundamental rules of sound Biblical interpretation--that texts must be interpreted in their context and that no text can be interpreted in such a way as to be in manifest contradiction with the clear teachings of the rest of the Bible--it is possible to prove any lie, even the lie of original sin.

Anthology

In this final section of the book I have included excerpts from Charles G. Finney's Sermons on Gospel Themes, An Autobiography, and Lectures on Systematic Theology; Henry C. Sheldon's System of Christian Doctrine; Moses Stuart's Commentary on Romans; and Albert Barnes' Notes on the Epistles to the Romans, in that order.

I hesitated to include Moses Stuart's Commentary on Romans and Albert Barnes' Notes on the Epistle to the Romans because theirs are critical commentaries which appeal to the original Greek language. But I have included them anyway because a critical commentary is so valuable on this subject, and even though the reader may know nothing of the original Greek language, he still will not be substantially hindered in following the arguments of these two authors.

Excerpts from Charles G. Finney's Sermon

THE EXCUSES OF SINNERS

Men plead a sinful nature for their excuse. And pray, what is this sinful nature? Do you mean by it that every faculty and even the very essence of your constitution were poisoned and made sinful in Adam, and came down in this polluted state by inheritance to you? Do you mean that you were so born in sin that the substance of your being is all saturated with it, and so that all the faculties of your constitution are themselves sin? Do you believe this?

I admit if this were true, it would make out a hard case. A hard case indeed! Until the laws of my reason are changed, it would compel me to speak out openly and say--Lord, this is a hard case, that Thou shouldst make my nature itself a sinner, and then charge the guilt of its sin upon me! I could not help saying this; the deep echoings of my inner being would proclaim it without ceasing, and the breaking of ten thousand thunderbolts over my head would not deter me from thinking and saying so. The reason God has given me would forever affirm it.

But the dogma is an utter absurdity. For, pray, what is sin? God answers--"transgression of law." And now you hold that your nature is itself a breach of the law of God--nay, that it has always been a breach of God's law, from Adam to the day of your birth; you hold that the current of this sin came down in the veins and blood of your race--and who made it so? Who created the veins and blood of man? From whose hand sprang this physical constitution and this mental constitution? Was man his own creator? Did sin do a part of the work in creating your physical and your mental constitution? Do you believe any such thing? No; you ascribe your nature and its original faculties to God, and upon Him, therefore, you charge the guilty authorship of your "sinful nature."

But how strange a thing is this! If man is in fault for his sinful nature, why not condemn man for having blue or black eyes? The fact is, sin never can consist in having a nature, nor in what nature is; but only and alone in the bad use which we make of our nature. This is all. Our Maker will never find fault with us for what He has Himself done or made; certainly not. He will not condemn us, if we will only make a right use of our powers--of our intellect, our sensibility, and our will. He never holds us responsible for our original nature. If you will observe, you will find that

God has given no law prescribing what sort of nature and constitutional powers we should have. He has given no law on these points, the transgression of which, if given, might somewhat resemble the definition of sin. But now since there is no law about nature, nature cannot be a transgression.

Here let me say, that if God were to make a law prescribing what nature or constitution a man must have, it could not possibly be otherwise than unjust and absurd, for the reason that man's nature is not a proper subject for legislation, precept, and penalty, inasmuch as it lies entirely without the pale of voluntary action, or of any action of man at all. And yet thousands of men have held the dogma that sin consists in great part in having a sinful nature. Yes, through long ages of past history, grave theologians have gravely taught this monstrous dogma; it has resounded from pulpits, and has been stereotyped for the press, and men have seemed to be never weary of glorifying this dogma as the surest test of sound orthodoxy! Orthodoxy!! There never was a more infamous libel on Jehovah! It would be hard to name another dogma which more violently outrages common sense. It is nonsense--absurd and utter NONSENSE! I would to God that it were not even worse than nonsense! Think what mischief it has wrought! Think how it has scandalized the law, the government, and the character of God! Think how it has filled the mouths of sinners with excuses from the day of its birth to this hour!

Now I do not mean to imply that the men who have held this dogma have intelligently insulted God with it. I do not imply that they have been aware of the impious and even blasphemous bearings of this dogma upon Jehovah;--I am happy to think that some at least have done all this mischief ignorantly. But the blunder and the mischief have been none the less for the honest ignorance in which they were done.

Excerpts from Charles G. Finney's "Autobiography"

HIS DOCTRINAL EDUCATION

I have spoken at considerable length of my protracted controversy with my theological teacher, Mr. Gale. Upon reflection I think that I should state a little more definitely some of the points upon which we had so much discussion. I could not receive that theological fiction of imputation. I will state, as nearly as I can, the exact ground that he maintained and insisted upon. First, he maintained that the guilt of Adam's first transgression is literally imputed to all his posterity; so that they are justly sentenced and exposed to eternal damnation for Adam's sin. Secondly, he maintained that we received from Adam, by natural generation, a nature wholly sinful, and morally corrupt in every faculty of soul and body; so that we are totally unable to perform any act acceptable to God, and are necessitated by our sinful nature to transgress his law, in every action of our lives. And this, he insisted, is the estate into which all men fell by the first sin of Adam. For this sinful nature, thus received from Adam by natural generation, all mankind are also sentenced to, and are deserving of eternal damnation. Then, thirdly, in addition to this, he maintained that we are all justly condemned and sentenced to eternal damnation for our own unavoidable transgression of the law. Thus we find ourselves justly subject to a triple eternal damnation.

Then the second branch of this wonderful imputation is as follows: The sin of all the elect, both original and actual--that is, the guilt of Adam's sin, together with the guilt of their sinful nature, and also guilt of their personal transgressions, are all literally imputed to Christ; and therefore the divine government regarded him as an embodiment of all the sins and guilt of the elect, and treated him accordingly; that is, the Father punished the Son precisely as much as all the elect deserved. Hence their debt being thus fully discharged by the punishment of Christ, they are saved upon principles of "exact justice."

The third branch of this wonderful theological fiction is as follows: First--The obedience of Christ to the divine law is literally imputed to the elect; so that in him they are regarded as having always perfectly obeyed the law. Secondly--His death for them is also imputed to the elect; so that in him they are regarded as having fully suffered all that they deserve on account of the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to them, and on account of their sinful nature, and also on account of all their personal

transgressions. Thirdly--Thus by their surety the elect have first perfectly obeyed the law; and then they have by and in their surety suffered the full penalty to which they were subject in consequence of the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to them, and also the guilt of their sinful nature, with all their blameworthiness for their personal transgressions. Thus they have suffered in Christ, just as if they had not obeyed in him. He, first, perfectly obeys for them, which obedience is strictly imputed to them, so that they are regarded by the government of God as having fully obeyed in their surety; secondly, he has suffered for them the penalty of the law, just as if no obedience had been rendered; thirdly, after the law has been doubly satisfied, the elect are required to repent as if no satisfaction had been rendered; fourthly, payment in full having been rendered twice over, the discharge of the elect is claimed to be an act of infinite grace. Thus the elect are saved by grace on principles of justice, so that there is strictly no grace or mercy in our forgiveness, but the whole grace of our salvation is found in the obedience and sufferings of Christ.

It follows that the elect may demand their discharge on the score of strict justice. They need not pray for pardon or forgiveness; it is all a mistake to do so. This inference is my own; but it follows, as every one can see, irresistibly, from what the confession of faith itself asserts, that the elect are saved on principles of exact and perfect justice.

I found it impossible to agree with Mr. Gale on these points. I could not but regard and treat this whole question of imputation as a theological fiction. Upon these points we had constant discussion, in some shape, during the whole course of my study.

I do not recollect that Mr. Gale ever insisted that the confession of faith taught these principles, as I learned that it did when I came to study it. I was not aware that the rules of the presbytery required them to ask a candidate if he accepted the Presbyterian confession of faith. As soon as I learned what were the unambiguous teachings of the confession of faith upon these points, I did not hesitate on all suitable occasions to declare my dissent from them. I repudiated and exposed them. Wherever I found that any class of persons were hidden behind these dogmas, I did not hesitate to demolish them, to the best of my ability.

I have not caricatured these positions of Mr. Gale, but have stated them, as nearly as I can, in the very language in which he would defend them,

when I presented them to him in controversy. He did not pretend that they were rational, or that they would bear reasoning upon. Hence he insisted that my reasoning would lead me into infidelity. But I insisted that our reason was given us for the very purpose of enabling us to justify the ways of God; and that no such fiction of imputation could by any possibility be true.

Of course there were many other points that were so related to these as necessarily to come under discussion, upon which we had a good deal of controversy, but our controversy always turned upon this as the foundation. If man had a sinful nature, then regeneration must consist in a change of nature. If man's nature was sinful, the influence of the Holy Spirit that must regenerate him, must be physical and not moral. If man had a sinful nature, there was no adaptation in the gospel to change his nature, and consequently no connection, in religion, between means and end.

This brother Gale sternly held; and consequently in his preaching he never seemed to expect, nor even to aim at converting anybody, by any sermon that I ever heard him preach. And yet he was an able preacher as preaching was then estimated. The fact is, these dogmas were a perfect strait-jacket to him. If he preached repentance, he must be sure before he sat down, to leave the impression on his people that they could not repent. If he called them to believe he must be sure to inform them that, until their nature was changed by the Holy Spirit, faith was impossible to them. And so his orthodoxy was a perfect snare to himself and to his hearers. I could not receive it. I did not so understand my Bible; nor could he make me see that it was taught in the Bible.

When I came to read the confession of faith, and saw the passages that were quoted to sustain these peculiar positions, I was absolutely ashamed of it. I could not feel any respect for a document that would undertake to impose on mankind such dogmas as those, sustained, for the most part, by passages of Scripture that were totally irrelevant; and not in a single instance sustained by passages which, in a court of law, would have been considered at all conclusive. But the presbytery, so far as I know, were all of one way of thinking at that time. They subsequently, however, I believe, all gave in; and when Mr. Gale changed his views. I heard no more from any of the members of the presbytery in defence of those views.

REVIVAL AT GOUVERNEUR

There was a merchant living in the village by the name of S-----. He was a very amiable man, a gentleman, but a deist. His wife was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. She was his second wife; and his first had also been the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. He had thus married into two ministers' families. His fathers-in-law had taken the greatest pains to secure his conversion to Christ. He was a reading, reflecting man. Both of his fathers-in-law were old school Presbyterians, and had put into his hands the class of books that presented their peculiar views. This had greatly stumbled him; and the more he had read, the more he was fixed in his convictions that the Bible was a fable.

His wife urgently entreated me to come and converse with her husband. She informed me of his views, and of the pains that had been taken to lead him to embrace the Christian religion. But she said he was so firmly settled in his views, she did not know that any conversation could meet the case. Nevertheless, I promised to call and see him, and did so. His store was in the front part of the building in which they resided. She went into the store, and requested him to come in. He declined. He said it would do no good; that he had talked with ministers enough; that he knew just what I would say, beforehand, and he could not spend the time; beside, it was very repulsive to his feelings. She replied to him, "Mr. S-----, you have never been in the habit of treating ministers, who called to see you, in this way. I have invited Mr. Finney to call and see you, to have a conversation on the subject of religion; and I shall be greatly grieved and mortified, if you decline to see him."

He greatly respected and loved his wife; and she was indeed a gem of a woman. To oblige her, he consented to come in. Mrs. S---- introduced me to him, and left the room. I then said to him, "Mr. S----, I have not come in here to have any dispute with you at all; but if you are willing to converse, it is possible that I may suggest something that may help you over some of your difficulties, in regard to the Christian religion, as I probably have felt them all myself." As I addressed him in great kindness, he immediately seemed to feel at home with me, and sat down near me and said, "Now, Mr. Finney, there is no need of our having a long conversation on this point. We are both of us so familiar with the arguments, on both sides, that I can state to you, in a very few minutes, just the objections to the Christian religion on which I rest, and which I

find myself utterly unable to overcome. I suppose I know beforehand how you will answer them, and that the answer will be utterly unsatisfactory to me. But if you desire it, I will state them."

I begged him to do so; and he began, as nearly as I can recollect, in this way: "You and I agree in believing in the existence of God." "Yes." "Well, we agree that he is infinitely wise, and good, and powerful." "Yes." "We agree that he has, in our very creation, given us certain irresistible convictions of right and wrong, of justice and injustice." "Yes." "Well, we agree, then, that whatever contravenes our irresistible convictions of justice, cannot be from God." "Yes," I said. "What, according to our irresistible convictions, is neither wise nor good, cannot be from God." "Yes," I said, "we agree in that." "Well now," said he, "the Bible teaches us that God has created us with a sinful nature, or that we come into existence totally sinful and incapable of any good, and this in accordance with certain preestablished laws of which God is the author; that notwithstanding this sinful nature, which is utterly incapable of any good, God commands us to obey him, and to be good, when to do so is utterly impossible to us; and he commands this on pain of eternal death."

I replied, "Mr. S----, have you a Bible? Will you not turn to the passage that teaches this?" "Why, there is no need of that," he says; "you admit that the Bible teaches it." "No," I said, "I do not believe any such thing." "Then," he continued, "the Bible teaches that God has imputed Adam's sin to all his posterity; that we inherit the guilt of that sin by nature, and are exposed to eternal damnation for the guilt of Adam's sin. Now," said he, "I do not care who says it, or what book teaches such a thing, I know that such teaching cannot be from God. This is a direct contradiction of my irresistible convictions of right and justice." "Yes," I replied, "and so it is directly in contradiction of my own. But now," said I, "where is this taught in the Bible?"

He began to quote the catechism, as he had done before. "But," I replied, "that is catechism, not Bible." "Why," said he, "you are a Presbyterian minister, are you not? I thought the catechism was good authority for you." "No," I said; "we are talking about the Bible now--whether the Bible is true. Can you say that this is the doctrine of the Bible?" "Oh," he said, "if you are going to deny that it is taught in the Bible--why, that is taking such ground as I never knew a Presbyterian minister to take." He then proceeded to say that the Bible commanded men to repent, but at the

same time taught them that they could not repent; it commanded them to obey and believe, and yet at the same time taught them that this is impossible. I of course closed with him again, and asked him where these things were taught in the Bible. He quoted catechism; but I would not receive it.

He went on to say that the Bible taught also, that Christ died only for the elect; and yet it commanded all men every where, whether elect or non-elect, to believe, on pain of eternal death. "The fact is," said he, "the Bible, in its commands and teachings contravenes my innate sense of justice at every step. I cannot, I will not receive it!" He became very positive and warm. But I said to him: "Mr. S----, there is a mistake in this. These are not the teachings of the Bible. They are the traditions of men rather than the teachings of the Bible." "Well then," said he, "Mr. Finney, do tell me what you do believe!" This he said with a considerable degree of impatience. I said to him, "If you will give me a hearing for a few moments, I will tell you what I do believe." I then began and told him what my views of both the law and the gospel were. He was intelligent enough to understand me easily and quickly. In the course of an hour, I should think, I took him over the whole ground of his objections. He became intensely interested; and I saw that the views that I was presenting, were new to him.

When I came to dwell upon the atonement, and showed that it was made for all men--dwelt upon its nature, its design, its extent, and the freeness of salvation through Christ, I saw his feelings rise, till at last he put both hands over his face, threw his head forward upon his knees, and trembled all over with emotion. I saw that the blood rushed to his head, and that the tears began to flow freely. I rose quickly and left the room without saying another word. I saw that an arrow had transfixed him, and I expected him to be converted immediately. It turned out that he was converted before he left the room.

REVIVALS AT WILMINGTON AND AT PHILADELPHIA

While I was laboring at New Lebanon, the preceding summer, Rev. Mr. Gilbert of Wilmington, Delaware, whose father resided in New Lebanon, came there on a visit. Mr. Gilbert was very old-school in his theological views, but a good and earnest man. His love of souls overruled all difficulty on nice questions of theological difference, between him and

myself. He heard me preach in New Lebanon, and saw the results; and he was very earnest that I should come, and aid him in Wilmington.

As soon as I could see my way clear to leave Stephentown, therefore, I went to Wilmington, and engaged in labors with Mr. Gilbert. I soon found that his teaching had placed the church in a position that rendered it impossible to promote a revival among them, till their views could be corrected. They seemed to be afraid to make any effort, lest they should take the work out of the hands of God. They had the oldest of the old-school views of doctrine; and consequently their theory was that God would convert sinners in his own time; and that therefore to urge them to immediate repentance, and in short to attempt to promote a revival, was to attempt to make men Christians by human agency, and human strength, and thus to dishonor God by taking the work out of his hands. I observed also, that in their prayers there was no urgency for an immediate outpouring of the Spirit, and that this was all in accordance with the views in which they had been educated.

It was plain that nothing could be done, unless Mr. Gilbert's view could be changed upon this subject. I therefore spent hours each day in conversing with him on his peculiar views. We talked the subject all over in a brotherly manner; and after laboring with him in this way for two or three weeks, I saw that his mind was prepared to have my own views brought before his people. The next Sabbath, I took for my text: "Make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die?" I went thoroughly into the subject of the sinner's responsibility; and showed what a new heart is not, and what it is. I preached about two hours; and did not sit down till I had gone as thoroughly over the whole subject, as very rapid speaking would enable me to do, in that length of time.

The congregation became intensely interested, and great numbers rose and stood on their feet, in every part of the house. The house was completely filled, and there were strange looks in the assembly. Some looked distressed and offended, others intensely interested. Not infrequently, when I brought out strongly the contrast between my own views, and the views in which they had been instructed, some laughed, some wept, some were manifestly angry; but I do not recollect that any one left the house. It was a strange excitement.

In the meantime, Mr. Gilbert moved himself from one end of the sofa to

the other, in the pulpit behind me. I could hear him breathe and sigh, and could not help observing that he was himself in the greatest anxiety. However, I knew I had him, in his convictions, fast; but whether he would make up his mind to withstand what would be said by his people, I did not know. But I was preaching to please the Lord, and not man. I thought that it might be the last time I should ever preach there; but purposed, at all events, to tell them the truth, and the whole truth, on that subject, whatever the result might be.

I endeavored to show that if man were as helpless as their views represented him to be, he was not to blame for his sins. If he had lost in Adam all power of obedience, so that obedience had become impossible to him, and that not by his own act or consent, but by the act of Adam, it was mere nonsense to say that he could be blamed for what he could not help. I had endeavored also to show that, in that case, the atonement was no grace, but really a debt due to mankind, on the part of God, for having placed them in a condition so deplorable and so unfortunate. Indeed, the Lord helped me to show up, I think, with irresistible clearness the peculiar dogmas of old-schoolism and their inevitable results.

When I was through, I did not call upon Mr. Gilbert to pray, for I dared not; but prayed myself that the Lord would set home the word, make it understood, and give a candid mind to weigh what had been said, and to receive the truth, and to reject what might be erroneous. I then dismissed the assembly, and went down the pulpit stairs, Mr. Gilbert following me. The congregation withdrew very slowly, and many seemed to be standing and waiting for something, in almost every part of the house. The aisles were cleared pretty nearly; and the rest of the congregation seemed to remain in a waiting position, as if they supposed they should hear from Mr. Gilbert, upon what had been said. Mrs. Gilbert, however, went immediately out.

As I came down the pulpit stairs, I observed two ladies sitting on the left hand of the aisle through which we must pass, to whom I had been introduced, and who, I knew, were particular friends and supporters of Mr. Gilbert. I saw that they looked partly grieved, and partly offended, and greatly astonished. The first we reached, who was near the pulpit stairs, took hold of Mr. Gilbert as he was following behind me, and said to him, "Mr. Gilbert, what do you think of that?" She spoke in a loud whisper. He replied in the same manner, "It is worth five hundred dollars." That greatly

gratified me, and affected me very much. She replied, "Then you have never preached the Gospel." "Well," said he, "I am sorry to say I never have." We passed along, and then the other lady said to him about the same things, and received a similar reply. That was enough for me; I made my way to the door and went out. Those that had gone out were standing, many of them, in front of the house, discussing vehemently the things that had been said. As I passed along the streets going to Mr. Gilbert's, where I lodged, I found the streets full of excitement and discussion. The people were comparing views; and from the few words that escaped from those that did not observe me as I passed along, I saw that the impression was decidedly in favor of what had been said.

When I arrived at Mr. Gilbert's, his wife accosted me as soon as I entered, by saying, "Mr. Finney, how dared you preach any such thing in our pulpit?" I replied, "Mrs. Gilbert, I did not dare to preach anything else; it is the truth of God." She replied, "Well, it is true that God was in justice bound to make atonement for mankind. I have always felt it, though I never dared say it. I believed that if the doctrine preached by Mr. Gilbert was true, God was under obligation, as a matter of justice, to make an atonement, and to save me from those circumstances in which it is impossible for me to help myself, and from a condemnation which I did not deserve."

Just at this moment Mr. Gilbert entered. "There," said I, "Brother Gilbert, you see the results of your preaching, here in your own family;" and then repeated to him what his wife had just said. He replied, "I have sometimes thought that my wife was one of the most pious women that I ever knew; and at other times I have thought that she had no religion at all." "Why!" I exclaimed, "she has always thought that God owed her, as a matter of justice, the salvation provided in Christ; how can she be a Christian?" This was all said, by each of us, with the greatest solemnity and earnestness. Upon making the last remark, she got up and left the room. The house was very solemn; and for two days, I believe, I did not see her. She then came out clear, not only in the truth, but in the state of her own mind; having passed through a complete revolution of views and experience.

From this point the work went forward. The truth was worked out admirably by the Holy Spirit. Mr. Gilbert's views became greatly changed; and also his style of preaching, and manner of presenting the Gospel. So

far as I know, until the day of his death, his views remained corrected, new school as opposed to the old school views which he had before maintained.

The effect of this sermon upon many of Mr. Gilbert's church members was very peculiar. I have spoken of the lady who asked him what he thought of it. She afterwards told me that she was so offended, to think that all her views of religion were so overthrown, that she promised herself she never would pray again. She had been in the habit of so far justifying herself because of her sinful nature, and had taken, in her own mind, such a position as Mrs. Gilbert had held, that my preaching on that subject had completely subverted her views, her religion, and all. She remained in this state of rebellion, if I recollect right, for some six weeks, before she would pray again. She then broke down, and became thoroughly changed in her views and religious experience. And this, I believe, was the case with a large number of that church.

Excerpts from Charles G. Finney's Lectures on Systematic Theology

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

1. To a great extent, the truths of the blessed gospel have been hidden under a false philosophy. In my early inquiries on the subject of religion, I found myself wholly unable to understand either the oral or written instructions of uninspired religious teachers. They seemed to me to resolve all religion into states either of the intellect or of the sensibility, which my consciousness assured me were wholly passive or involuntary. When I sought for definitions and explanations, I felt assured that they did not well understand themselves. I was struck with the fact that they so seldom defined, even to themselves, their own positions. Among the words of most frequent use, I could find scarcely a single term intelligibly defined. I inquired in what sense the terms "regeneration," "faith," "repentance," "love," etc., were used, but could obtain no answer, at which it did not appear to me that both reason and revelation revolted. The doctrines of a nature, sinful per se, of a necessitated will, of inability, and of physical regeneration, and physical Divine influence in regeneration, with their kindred and resulting dogmas, embarrassed and even confounded me at every step. I often said to myself, "If these things are really taught in the Bible, I must be an infidel." But the more I read the Bible, the more clearly I saw that these things were not found there upon any fair principles of interpretation, such as would be admitted in a court of justice. I could not but perceive that the true idea of moral government had no place in the theology of the church; and, on the contrary, that underlying the whole system were the assumptions that all government was physical, as opposed to moral, and that sin and holiness are rather natural attributes, than moral, voluntary acts. These errors were not stated in words, but I could not fail to see that they were assumed. The distinction between original and actual sin, and the utter absence of a distinction between physical and moral depravity, embarrassed me. Indeed, I was satisfied either that I must be an infidel, or that these were errors that had no place in the Bible. I was often warned against reasoning and leaning to my own understanding. I found that the discriminating teachers of religion were driven to confess that they could not establish the logical consistency of their system, and that they were obliged to shut their eyes and believe, when revelation seemed to conflict with the affirmations of reason. But this course I could not take. I found,

or thought I found, nearly all the doctrines of Christianity embarrassed by the assumptions above-named. But the Spirit of God conducted me through the darkness, and delivered me from the labyrinth and fog of a false philosophy, and set my feet upon the rock of truth, as I trust. But to this day I meet with those who seem to me to be in much confusion upon most of the practical doctrines of Christianity. They will admit, that sin and holiness must be voluntary, and yet speak of regeneration as consisting in anything but a voluntary change, and of Divine influence in regeneration, as anything but moral or persuasive. They seem not at all aware of what must follow from, and be implied in, the admission of the existence of moral government, and that sin and holiness must be free and voluntary acts and states of mind. In this work I have endeavored to define the terms used by Christian divines, and the doctrines of Christianity, as I understand them, and to push to their logical consequences the cardinal admissions of the more recent and standard theological writers. Especially do I urge, to their logical consequences, the two admissions that the will is free, and that sin and holiness are voluntary acts of mind.

Excerpts from Henry C. Sheldon's System of Christian Doctrine

IX.--BIBLICAL AND RATIONAL DATA AS TO MAN'S CONDITION BY BIRTH, OR THE QUESTION OF ORIGINAL SIN

One familiar with the theological teaching of the centuries, with its confident and explicit indoctrination on original sin, or the Adamic connections of human sinfulness, is naturally surprised when he turns to the Bible to find it well-nigh silent on this theme. In the Old Testament it is not awarded a single direct word. Only one New Testament writer makes specific mention of it, and that in the course of historical parallels where the line cannot be regarded as sharply drawn between literal fact and admissible symbolism. In neither Testament is there any approach to the assertion that the moral state of the race was so conditioned upon the conduct of Adam that if he had continued obedient to the divine command the race would infallibly have persisted in holiness. This is a monstrous imagination which limits the notion of probation to Adam alone, if it does not cancel it entirely, and throws the whole responsibility for the occurrence of sin upon the will of God. For if God could have kept every one of Adam's posterity from falling, then we are obliged to conclude that he could just as well as not have kept Adam from falling, and the fact of his transgression is clear proof that God was well pleased to have him transgress. But this conclusion makes a mock of sin, since it is perfectly manifest that what pleases God ought not to make anyone sorry, or else that it is obligatory to regard the divine pleasure a subordinate interest....

As for the New Testament, only two or three Pauline passages come into the account, as having any real appearance of making the race sharers in the guilt or condemnation of Adam's sin. Of these the most important is Rom. v. 12-21. The apostle here draws a comparison between the evil potency in the sinning Adam and the beneficent or saving potency in the righteous Christ. As the one reached beyond all national bounds, and affected the lot of the race as a whole, so the other, which serves as an offset, is intrinsically adapted to be at least of as far-reaching effect. Both are pictured rather according to their tendency than according to literal fact. Surely the potency of grace in Christ does not actually come upon

all men unto justification of life, but it tends to that end, and hence is so described. In like manner the evil potency in the sinning Adam is characterized according to its tendency. In strictness it was only an initial cause of the depravation of the race; but as a corrupt disposition is a standing occasion of sin, the primary source of the corruption--the trespass of Adam--is graphically described as making men sinners, or as involving all in sin. This is bold language, to affirm the fact where only the potency comes into account which tends to the realization of the fact; but it is not discordant with Paul's usage. He represents, for example, believers as having died with Christ, or as having been crucified with Him.

Why? Simply because the death of Christ had in itself a potency for extirpating or crucifying the old man with his carnal and sinful disposition. So in like manner as regards the sin of Adam. Men did not actually sin in his sin, or become sinners through him without an exercise in detail of personal agency, any more than they were actually crucified with Christ. Why should a prosaic and rigorous construction be demanded in the one instance and be excluded in the other? In either case, and no less in the one than in the other, it is reasonable to take the words of the apostle as religious oratory, in whose vivid strain the tendency is treated as substantially identical with the fact toward which it tends.

If the passage in the fifth chapter of Romans is not to be regarded as teaching the condemnation of all men on the simple ground of Adam's sin, no more can such a tenet be found in Eph. ii. 3. The context of the clause, "by nature children of wrath," emphasizes the force of ungodliness in both Jews and Gentiles. There is nothing in the connection to hint that the sin of Adam was in the thought of the apostle. As little is there any indication that he was thinking of the state of new-born infants. It is the ingrained sinfulness of contemporary men, manifested in the fulfillment of fleshly desires, upon which he is dwelling. Surveying this rank of conscious accountable transgressors, and viewing them as living out a characteristic tendency or disposition, Paul speaks of them as by nature children of wrath. Would the apostle, apart from the assumed fact of a personal appropriation and living out of abnormal tendencies, have regarded any of this group as actually subjects of God's wrath? We believe it rash to assume that he would. He has nowhere described little children as under the wrath of God. It is to be noticed,

moreover, that Paul has given us a hint that the term *phusei*, "by nature," is not necessarily to be understood of a condition resulting simply from birth. In Rom. ii. 14 he speaks of the Gentiles as doing "by nature" the things of law. Now, evidently he did not mean that they were born doers of the law, but only that they were born with a nature adapted to provide in due time for a sense of moral obligations. In like manner the phrase in Ephesians may reasonably be taken as meaning, not that men are born children of wrath, but only that by birth they have a nature which tends to such personal choice and conduct as invite the divine displeasure. In any case, if we bring the New Testament into view, the scene of Christ blessing little children, and declaring that "of such is the kingdom of heaven," must be regarded quite as truly indicative of their standing before God as a brief phrase in an epistle, in which there is no specific mention of children and no certain reference to their standing.

Excerpts from Moses Stuart's Commentary on Romans

ROMANS 5:19

In ver. 12, when the apostle had said, that 'by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men,' he meant by these last words (as we have seen above), that his readers should understand him to hint, that the passing of death upon all men had some connection with Adam's offence. But still he subjoins immediately, as the specific and immediate reason or ground of this death, *eph o pantes hemarton*. Why not recognize the same connection and the same sentiment here? Adam's sin was a cause or ground why all men are constituted sinners; yet Adam's sin is not affirmed to be their sin; they are not said to be *en auto hamartoloi*, nor *te hamartia autou hamartoloi*, nor yet to *katakpimati autou katadedikasmеноi*; but they are *hamartoloi* in, by, and for themselves. A ground or cause of this, was Adam's offence. But natural evil, and disadvantage, and degeneracy of nature is one thing, and sin, is another. A man's sin is and must be his own act, either internal or external, or both; and for men to be *hamartoloi*, they must be actively and voluntarily so. Another man's sin can no more be mine, than his soul can be mine; no more than his consciousness, will, affections, or disposition, can be mine. To impute them to me, then, must be to impute to me what in fact does not belong to me, what never did, and what never can. The candid advocates of imputation in its highest sense, concede this. But how much progress do we make in the knowledge of things, and in the explanation of important principles in theology, when we affirm that God counts that as existing which does not in reality exist, and which is in itself an impossibility?

To avoid the difficulty of such imputation (which indeed such men as Calvin, and Edwards, and Stapfer pointedly rejected) some, e.g., Edwards and others, have assumed an absolute unity or oneness of Adam and all his posterity. But this method of explanation is fraught with difficulties both physiological and moral. It is physiologically untrue. A separate consciousness, will, affections, desires, etc., make separate beings; or else there is but one being material or immaterial, in the universe. Consciousness contradicts this theory. Individual accountability renders it incredible. If Adam and his posterity are indeed all one, then all their sins are just as much his, as his is theirs, and his penitence is as much theirs, as his offences. Or is it true, that God, a being of boundless

benevolence and love of holiness, has made such a world that nothing but sin can be propagated in it?

The simple statement of fact seems to be, after all, that God has such an utter aversion to sin, that he has testified his displeasure by an appalling exhibition of the woeful consequences to which it leads. Sin is a violation of the order and harmony of the universe, and consequently productive of evil, because it disturbs those laws and tendencies all of which are in themselves productive of good. The greatest mischief of all is, that sin, in this way, brings suffering and sorrow upon the innocent as well as the guilty. But in this very way, too, the odious and abominable nature of sin is most fully and completely exhibited. The earth cursed for man's sake; the brute creation subjected to innumerable evils on his account; the posterity of Adam born heirs of suffering, and despoiled of the disposition to obedience which our primitive ancestors possessed; are all striking and melancholy evidences of the evil of sin. But for the evils to which Adam's posterity are subjected and exposed, God has provided a remedy; or rather, he has prepared the way for redemption from them. The two things, therefore, now go together, viz., the exhibition of the dreadful effects of sin on the one hand, and of abounding mercy and benevolence on the other. The constitution of the universe, by which sin was made to appear so dreadful in its bitter fruits, is doubtless ordained to serve great and wise purposes, sooner or later, in the scheme of the divine moral government and discipline. Nor is the case of Adam's sin the only one, and altogether singular in its kind. The same principle in the constitution of the world everywhere develops itself. Parents by their vices ruin their children; wicked men corrupt their neighborhood; bad rulers affect whole nations with evil, the innocent as well as the guilty. Nothing can be more untrue, than that the mischiefs occasioned by sin light only upon the guilty. The horrible evil of sin is, that according to the constitution of the universe, it often involves the innocent as well as the guilty in its consequences. Nor could "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" be fully displayed and held forth in its odious light to the abhorrence of all benevolent beings, unless such were the case. Still, after all is attributed to the first sin which belongs to it, it would be difficult to see how Adam's first offence differed from other sins, as to the consequences which it superinduced, excepting that his condition and his relations to the whole human race differed greatly from those of any of his posterity. The consequences of his sin, therefore, were peculiar and awfully deleterious.

It is then one thing to be made a sufferer on account of the sin of others, and another thing to be constituted a sinner by something that he has done. So far as it respects the manner in which Adam's sin has affected us, both of these consequences have flowed from it.

ROMANS 9:11

Neither having done anything good or evil, mede...kakon; a very important declaration in respect to its bearing on some of the controverted questions about hereditary depravity or original sin. It appears that when the words related in the next verse were spoken to Rebecca, the children in her womb had arrived to such a state or growth as that life and motion in them were perceived by the mother, Gen. xxv. 22, 23, i.e., to the age of some five months, comp. Luke i. 24. At this period, then, the apostle declares that they had done neither good nor evil, i.e., they had as yet no positive moral character or (in other words) that there was as yet no development of their moral powers. And with the principle here developed, the tenor of other texts, as well as every man's consciousness, agrees; e.g., Is. vii. 15, 16, comp. viii. 4. Deut. i. 39. Jonah iv. 11. That some knowledge of law and its obligations should exist in order that positive sin can be committed, seems to be clearly decided by Rom. iv. 15, and to be plainly implied by James iv. 17. John ix. 41. 1 John iii. 4. But when children do arrive at such a growth of moral nature that they begin positively to sin, the Scripture does not seem to have decided. The poetic and intensive expressions in Ps. li 5, when compared with Ps. lviii. 3, will hardly establish the doctrine which many have supposed it to establish. Gen. viii. 21 decides no more, than that men begin very early to commit sin; and John iii. 6. Eph. ii. 3, and other texts of a like nature, decide only that men in a natural state, i.e., in an unregenerate or unsanctified state, are children of wrath and carnal; which must be true, since they actually need regeneration.

The apostle, however, has here told us when sinning had NOT begun, in respect to Jacob and Esau. That they possessed powers or faculties, even in the womb, which were afterwards employed in committing sin when they were more fully developed, is undoubtedly true. But the power or faculty of sinning is one thing; the commission of sin another. Adam in paradise, before his fall, certainly possessed a susceptibility of excitement to sin, and the power or faculty of sinning, (else how could he have been tempted and sinned as he did?) yet he was not guilty of sin

because he possessed them, but for the abuse of them. It is not therefore the power or susceptibility which the Creator has given us, which makes us sinners; it is the abuse of them. But the fallen posterity of Adam possess a susceptibility of sin in a much greater degree, so that before regeneration, all their moral acts are sinful. Yet the apostle has decided in our text, that such acts do not take place before birth. Excitability in respect to forbidden objects must be yielded to before it becomes actual sin; or rather, the sin itself is in the yielding, and not in the original disposition which God himself has given us. Disposition to sin, so far as it is created by our indulgence in it, may fairly be put to our account and reckoned as sin. But to count that as sin, which the Maker of heaven and earth himself gave us, before all voluntary moral action, involves consequences that are of fearful aspect.

EXCURSUS VI

On Rom. v. 19, *dia tes parakoes tou henos anthropou hamartoloi katestathesan hoi polloi*(pp. 198, 199).

Those who are familiar with the idiom of the original Scriptures must know, that causation of every degree and kind was usually expressed by the Hebrews in one and the same way. We are accustomed, when we wish for nice distinctions, to speak of efficient or principal cause, and of secondary or instrumental or occasional cause, etc. But it is not so generally in the Scriptures. 'God moves David to go and number Israel, and Satan moves David to go and number Israel.' The very same verb is applied to both agents in this case. So 'the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardened his own heart;' see Exod. vii. 13, ix 12, x. 1, 20, 27, xi. 10, xiv. 8; Rom. ix. 18; Deut. ii. 30; Isai. Ixiii. 17; John xii. 40. So evil is ascribed to God, both moral and natural; 2 Sam. xii. 11, xvi. 10; 1 Kings xxii. 22; Josh. xi. 20; Ps. cv. 25; 1 Kings xi. 23, xxiv. 1. In like manner God is said to give men a new heart, and they are commanded to 'make to themselves a new heart;' the Spirit of God is said to convince and convert, and regenerate the sinner; and the same thing is often ascribed, for the most part in the like words, to the gospel and to the power of divine truth. Now he who has not carefully noted and weighed these obvious and highly important facts, is in great danger of making out in some way a very partial system of theology, and of contradicting in his exegesis of one part of the Bible, what the sacred writers have affirmed in another.

To apply this to the case before us. Were constituted sinners means, that Adam was, in some sense or other, the cause or occasion of his posterity becoming sinners. But whether this was through a degradation of their nature physically propagated down from father to son; or whether it was (as Chrysostom, cumenius, Pelagius, Erasmus, and others have with little probability maintained), only by virtue of the example which he set, or whether it was in some other way, is not determined by the language of the text. Such expressions as we have seen above, do not determine of themselves either the degree or the kind of causality. Principal or subordinate causation in this case may either of them be expressed by the phrase *dia tes--katestathesan*. The strenuous advocate for imputation avers, however, that the posterity of Adam were constituted sinners, by his offence being imputed to them, and their being treated as though they had committed it.

But when I look at the nature of this case, and ask what language the apostle would most probably have employed, had he designed to convey such a meaning, I am constrained to say, that the case can hardly be supposed with probability, that he would have employed merely such language as that before us, when other modes of expression more explicit and obvious were within his reach. *hoti en auto hamartoloi elogisthesan--hoti autois elogisthe he hamartia autou--or else hoti esan hypodikoi dia tes hamartias aotou*, or something equivalent to these expressions, might, not to say must, have been added after *hoi polloi*, so as to prevent all mistake. But as the matter now is, with the necessarily active sense of *hamartoloi*, the language itself cannot lead us philologically to the supposition of an imputation scheme of sin. See comm. on this verse and the preceding Excursus.

That men should be constituted or made sinners by the disobedience of Adam, most naturally means, I had almost said, must necessarily mean, that in some way his offence so affected them as that they become actual sinners in *propria persona*. Now is anything more common than this mode of expression? 'A man of vicious character,' we say, 'corrupts his whole family. A profligate of winning exterior corrupts the whole neighborhood of youth around him. One sceptic makes many doubters in revelation. Voltaire made half of literary Europe sceptical.' Now in these and a thousand other like expressions, we do mean to assert an active influence, a real causality in some proper sense, of the evil done or

spoken. Yet we never once think, for example, of Voltaire's scepticism being imputed to half of literacy Europe; nor do we once imagine, that any of the classes above named as being corrupted are corrupted without any voluntary agency of their own. The sin of corrupt feelings and affections is entirely their own: it matters not what the causes were which operated on them, so long as they were after all left to their own choice whether they would yield to the excitement or resist it.

In what way, then, does Adam's sin operate, in order to produce the effect which the apostle attributes to it? The degree, the extent, and nature of this influence, seem all to be laid open in the text. It amounts to such a degree as to involve us in a ruinous state or condition; it extends to all the posterity of Adam; it is a cause or ground of moral depravation, for it is the cause or occasion of all men's coming into condemnation, and therefore it must be a cause of their becoming sinners. But after all, the modus operandi is not declared by the apostle. He does not say, whether the operation of Adam's sin is on our physical or mental constitution; or whether it has influence merely on the condition in which we are placed, as being expelled from paradise and surrounded by peculiar temptations; nor whether it is example merely of Adam which we copy; and therefore a man may believe all that Paul has here taught, who refrains from speculations on any of these points, or on any others of the like nature. Better indeed would it have been for the quiet of the churches; if many had entirely refrained from all the particular modes of explanation which they have urged; for the danger is great that we may not only substitute our own individual belief and speculations for essential doctrines of the Scriptures here, but also for a commentary upon the text, and then elevate what we have thus superadded to an eminence far above the text itself.

Excerpts From Albert Barnes' Notes on the Epistle to the Romans

INTRODUCTION

I add, (6.) That one principal reason why so much difficulty has been felt here, has been an unwillingness to stop where the apostle does. Men have desired to advance farther, and penetrate the mysteries which the Spirit of inspiration has not disclosed. Where Paul states a simple fact, men often advance a theory. The fact may be clear and plain; their theory is obscure, involved, mysterious, or absurd. By degrees they learn to unite the fact and the theory:--they regard their explanation as the only possible one; and as the fact in question has the authority of divine revelation, so they insensibly come to regard their theory in the same light; and he that calls in question their speculation about the cause, or the mode, is set down as heretical, and as denying the doctrine of the apostle. A melancholy instance of this we have in the account which the apostle gives (ch. v.) about the effect of the sin of Adam. The simple fact is stated that that sin was followed by the sin and ruin of all his posterity. Yet he offers no explanation of the fact. He leaves it as indubitable; and as not demanding an explanation in his argument--perhaps as not admitting it. This is the whole of his doctrine on that subject. Yet men have not been satisfied with that. They have sought for a theory to account for it. And many suppose they have found it in the doctrine that the sin of Adam is imputed, or set over by an arbitrary arrangement to beings otherwise innocent, and that they are held to be responsible for a deed committed by a man thousands of years before they were born. This is the theory; and men insensibly forget that it is mere theory, and they blend that and the fact which the apostle states together; and deem the denial of the one, heresy as much as the denial of the other, i.e. they make it as impious to call in question their philosophy, as to doubt the facts stated on the authority of the apostle Paul. If men desire to understand the epistles of Paul, and avoid difficulties, they should be willing to leave it where he does; and this single rule would have made useless whole years and whole tomes of controversy...

ROMANS 5:12-21

12-21. This passage has been usually regarded as the most difficult part of the New Testament. It is not the design of these Notes to enter into a minute criticism of contested points like this. They who wish to see a full

discussion of the passage, may find it in the professedly critical commentaries; and especially in the commentaries of Tholuck and of Professor Stuart on the Romans. The meaning of the passage in its general bearing is not difficult; and probably the whole passage would have been found far less difficult if it had not been attached to a philosophical theory on the subject of man's sin, and if a strenuous and indefatigable effort had not been made to prove that it teaches what it was never designed to teach.

19. For, &c. This verse is not a mere repetition of the former, but it is an explanation. By the former statements it might perhaps be inferred that men were condemned without any guilt or blame of theirs. The apostle in this verse guards against this, and affirms that they are in fact sinners. He affirms that those who are sinners are condemned, and that the sufferings brought in on account of the sin of Adam, are introduced because many were made sinners. Calvin says, "Lest any one should arrogate to himself innocence, [the apostle] adds, that each one is condemned because he is a sinner."

By one man's disobedience. By means of the sin of Adam. This affirms simply the fact that such a result followed from the sin of Adam. The word by (dia) is used in the Scriptures as it is in all books and in all languages. It may denote the efficient cause; the instrumental cause; the principal cause; the meritorious cause; or the chief occasion by which a thing occurred. (See Schleusner.) It does not express one mode, and one only, in which a thing is done; but that one thing is the result of another. When we say that a young man is ruined in his character by another, we do not express the mode, but the fact. When we say that thousands have been made infidels by the writings of Paine and Voltaire, we make no affirmation about the mode, but about the fact. In each of these, and in all other cases, we should deem it most inconclusive reasoning to attempt to determine the mode by the preposition by; and still more absurd if it were argued from the use of that preposition that the sins of the seducer were imputed to the young man; or the opinions of Paine and Voltaire imputed to infidels.

There is not the slightest intimation that it was by imputation. The whole scope of the argument is, moreover, against this; for the object of the apostle is not to show that they were charged with the sin of another, but that they were in fact sinners themselves. If it means that they were

condemned for his act, without any concurrence of their own will, then the correspondent part will be true, that all are constituted righteous in the same way; and thus the doctrine of universal salvation will be inevitable. But as none are constituted righteous who do not voluntarily avail themselves of the provisions of mercy, so it follows that those who are condemned, are not condemned for the sin of another without their own concurrence, nor unless they personally deserve it.

Sinners. Transgressors; those who deserve to be punished. It does not mean those who are condemned for the sin of another; but those who are violators of the law of God. All who are condemned are sinners. They are not innocent persons condemned for the crime of another. Men may be involved in the consequences of the sins of others without being to blame. The consequences of the crimes of a murderer, a drunkard, a pirate, may pass over from them, and affect thousands, and whelm them in ruin. But this does not prove that they are blameworthy. In the divine administration none are regarded as guilty who are not guilty; none are condemned who do not deserve to be condemned. All who sink to hell are sinners.

Footnotes for Anthology

1. Charles G. Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rap[ids, 1953, p. 1.
2. Charles G. Finney, Sermons on Gospel Themes, Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, 1876, pp. 78-80.
3. Charles G. Finney, An Autobiography, Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, 1908, pp. 56-60, 123-126, 234-238.
4. Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theology, pp. ix, x, 228-229; 233-234; 240-258.
5. Henry C. Sheldon, System of Christian Doctrine, Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati, 1912, pp. 311-321.
6. 2 Cor 5:14; Rom 6:6; Gal. 2:20.
7. That Paul could not have meant that the race literally shared in Adam's sin is seen in the representatin of verse 14 that a part of mankind did not

sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression. These were indeed sinners, in Paul's view, as violating the dictates of conscience. But the fact that they were not regarded as sinners in the sense of Adam, who transgressed a positive precept, implies that his sin was not viewed as actually theirs. With the above interpretation the following from Professor George B. Stevens may be compared: "In what sense, according to Paul's characteristic modes of thought, does he mean that all men sinned when Adam sinned? They sinned in the same sense in which believers were crucified to the world and died unto sin when Christ died upon the cross. The believer's renewal is conceived as wrought in advance by those acts and experiences of Christ in which it has its ground. As the consequences of his vicarious sufferings are traced back to their cause, so are the consequences which flowed from the beginning of sin in Adam traced back to that original fount of evil and identified with it; but the latter statement should no more be treated as a rigid logical formula than the former, its counterpart." (Pauline Theology, pp. 135,136.)

8. Moses Stuart, Commentary on Romans, W.F. Draper, Andover, 1868, pp. 195-197, 327-328, 459-461.

9. Albert Barnes, Notes on the Epistle to the Romans, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1843, pp. x, 111-112, 126-127.

THE END.